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CHESHAM TREATISE ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS:

V I Z.

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| <p>I. On the Original Purity of Human Nature.</p> <p>II. On its present Depravity.</p> <p>III. Of the Defects which attended the Doctrine of Morality, as taught by <i>Philosophers</i> and <i>Poets</i>.</p> <p>IV. Of Regeneration, Conversion, and Sanctification.</p> <p>V. On the Difference between <i>real</i> Conversation, and the <i>Simblance</i> of it.</p> <p>VI. Of the Assurance of Faith.</p> <p>VII. On the Life of Faith.</p> | <p>VIII. On the Growth of Grace.</p> <p>IX. Of Declension in the Power of Religion; its Causes, and the Ways and Means of a happy Revival under Decays of Grace.</p> <p>X. On the Temptations of the present Age; and Cautions against them.</p> <p>XI. Of Communion with God, in the Course of that Obedience, which we are required to yield unto Him.</p> |
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Wherein various *difficult Cases of Conscience* are answered, as they occur, on the several SUBJECTS treated of.

By JOHN BRINE.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

UR present Situation, as a People professing Christianity, calls for two Things, in an especial Manner. One is the Defence of the Principles of our Religion, and that Revelation, wherein, those Principles are contained. For no small Numbers curtail, corrupt, or oppose the most important Doctrines of the Religion of Jesus; which makes it necessary truly to state, thoroughly explain, and defend them from the Cavils, and Objections of bold and daring Adversaries. And needful it is, to vindicate the sacred Word of God, which is objected unto by many; some in one Way, and some in another; but the Design of them all is to sink its Credit with Men, and to take them off from religiously regarding the sacred Scripture. I am not of the Opinion of those, who think, that too much Pains are taken, in either Part of this Service. On the contrary, I wish that more Hands were employed this Way, because I think our Circumstances require it.

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The other Service which is needful to be attended unto at this Time, is, an Endeavour to convince Professors of that Luke-warmness, Indifferency, and sad Declension, whereinto, they are now fallen. This latter, is chiefly bad in View, in the following Sheets, though some Regard is also had unto the momentous Doctrines of the Gospel, and their Defence. Wherein, I know not; but some may think, that I have used too much Freedom in censuring several popular, and very spreading Principles among us. What I have to offer in my Vindication, relating to that Matter is this. I am not sensible, that I have taken more Freedom with any Man's Notions, than I am heartily willing, that every Man should take with mine, viz. thoroughly examine them, and either, receive, or reject them, as they shall appear to him true, or false. This I am convinced, is a Liberty, that some do not like should be taken with what they publish to the World. All among us disclaim a Title to Infallibility; but some there are, who cannot patiently bear Contradiction. Though they pretend not to be infallible, they are displeased, if they are thought to err. And some are offended, if their Writings are examined, and their real Sentiments are exposed to View; because it is not their Choice, that their Apprehensions, on some Principles, should be fully and clearly known to all. I confess, that it never was, and I declare, that it never will be any Concern to me, what such Men shall think,

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or say, of my animadverting, upon what they publish.

In treating on the important Subject of natural Religion, wherein my principal Design was to prove, that, that is only to be learned in its Purity, from the Scriptures, I have pointed out some of those Defects, which attended the Doctrine of Morality, as it is taught by Heathen Writers. The Method I have taken, somewhat differs from that which has been used by others on that Subject. Which chiefly arose from these two Things: I was willing to grant (in Complaisance) to their Advocates, (if they will call it so) that mere Reason, and unassisted by Revelation, either immediately, or mediately, dictated to them, all which they have expressed of a moral Nature: And, this being granted in their Favour, my Design is to prove, that no Branch of that Purity, which God requires of all Men is taught by them, taken singly, nor all together. And I am not without Hope, that I have not wholly failed in this Design. And, if not, the absolute Necessity, as well as the Usefulness of Revelation may justly be concluded on, in order to our obtaining true Notions of Holiness, wherein the real Happiness of an intelligent Creature, certainly must very much consist: Which is a Point, that some of the pretended Friends to Revelation seem unwilling to grant.

As to the Subjects of Regeneration, Conversion, and Sanctification, and the Difference between

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II. The certain Efficacy of the *Death of Christ* asserted ; wherein the *Necessity*, *Reality* and *Perfection*, of His Satisfaction are pleaded for : The Objections of the *Socinians* and *Arminians* are answered : The Moral Law proved to be in full force ; and the conditional Nature of the New Covenant is demonstrated : In Answer to a Book called, *The Ruin and Recovery of Mankind*. The Mistakes of the Author, on various Subjects are discovered and corrected, viz. The Annihilation of Infants. The Imputation of Original Sin to Men. The Imputation of Sin to Christ. The Imputation of His Righteousness to His People. Also, The Necessity, and Nature of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Regeneration, are treated of : The Scriptural Account of these important Doctrines, is clearly stated, and vindicated, from his, and the Exceptions of some others. With a Postscript, proving that a Charge of Guilt is inseparable from Punishment.



CH A P. I.

Of the Original Purity of Human Nature.

 MY Soul, what is that Subject, which thou art about to contemplate? Consider it well, it is important, copious, and what thou hast never had Experience of. How then canst thou hope to form Conceptions of it agreeable to its Nature? Canst thou expect to delineate the original Beauties of the human Mind, who hast been *unlovely*, ever since thou wast, in the least Degree, conscious of thy own Acts? Is it likely, that thou shouldest be able to represent the Perfection of the intelligent Creature, particularly, Man, seeing thou hast never had a Sight of the lovely Image, either in thyself, or in another? The Undertaking must be difficult to any depraved Mind, and it certainly must be so much the more difficult to thee, by how much thou art less holy, and more degenerated than others are. But, my Soul, be not discouraged, nor decline the Work before thee, on that Account; the Labour, possibly, may be of some Advantage to others, and to thyself, it doubtless will be profitable: For, the better thou shalt be acquainted with

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the original Purity and Perfection of thy Nature, a juster Sense thou wilt have of that Vitiosity, which thou hast always been attended with, and, therefore, it may reasonably be expected, that thou wilt learn Humility, the evil Nature of Sin, and be stirred up to adore Divine Favour, which hath provided for thy new Beauty, that never can be lost. If these useful Ends should be, on thy Part, in any Measure answered, thou wilt be well recompensed for all thy Pains, were they far greater than thou art able to take in this momentous Enquiry. And, therefore, proceed to consider what the Excellency of thy Nature was, in its primitive State; and be sure that thou fail not to give an impartial and fair Representation of the original Glory of the human Mind, so far, as thou shalt be enabled to obtain the Knowledge of it, because thou naturally art the very Reverse of it, in thy Thoughts, Desires, and Affections. This, this, is my firm Resolution, and it is what I hope, constantly to keep in view.

Man as soon as he was created became subject to a Law. The Relation between God and the Creature, necessarily supposes the Subjection of the Creature to the Will and Rule of God. And the Divine Will hath the Power and Force of a Law; acting contrary to that is Disobedience and Rebellion.

Again, that Law whereunto Man was subjected certainly was perfect: Or it comprised the whole of his Duty. For it is irrational
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and impious to imagine, that God can be the Author of an imperfect Law. Infinite Rectitude can't fail of requiring what is holy in all its Branches, and in its full Extent.

Hence it follows, that Man was pure and holy in his Creation-State: Or possessed of Power to do the complete Will of God. For Equity requires that, the Powers of the Creature, as he is created by God, be sufficient to enable him to keep a Law, which is to be the Rule of his Actions. No Acts of Obedience, in Justice, can be demanded of the Creature, which exceed his Powers, as he is formed of his Maker. For, it is equitable that there be a Proportion between the Ability of the Creature, and the Command, under which he is placed, and, consequently, Man in his original State was perfect, and attended with no moral Disorder, or Defect. If he was not so, he could not keep a perfect Law, and to subject him to a Law which he could not obey, through a Weakness natural to him, as created of his Almighty Ruler, would have been unjust. And, therefore, as the Law was perfect, so was Man, the Subject of it. God cannot omit requiring of the Creature what is holy, nor, can He command Acts of Obedience of the Creature, which are beyond that Ability, which He furnishes the Creature with, in his Creation.

Moreover, the Holy Scriptures assert the Perfection of human Nature, in its original State. Uprightness is attributed to Man, and

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it is declared, that, God made him in his own Image. *Lo this only have I found, that God made Man, אדם i. e. the Man and the Woman, upright **; that is to say, pure, holy and perfectly so. Man had a Perfection of Knowledge: A holy Disposition of Mind: And perfect Purity in his Affections.

First, He had a Perfection of Knowledge, no Ignorance attended him in his primitive State.

1. Man had a perfect Knowledge of God, according to the Nature of that Law or Covenant, whereby, he was then directed to fear and serve him. Without a Perception of the Being and infinite Powers of Deity, no Acts of Adoration, Reverence, Trust and Love, can be exerted towards and on God our Maker. If, therefore, Man was obliged in his primitive State, to worship his Creator, of which surely none can doubt, it must be supposed, that he was acquainted with his Divine Excellencies and Glory. A blind Devotion was not performed by Man in Innocency: Or he did not worship he knew not what. Ignorance of God is the Consequence of Sin, and, therefore, Man was not the unhappy Subject of that Ignorance and Blindness, before his Transgression.

Some have thought, that he had a Knowledge of the Trinity, and it is not improbable. For though that is not attainable, by Reasoning

ing on the Operations of God's Hand, we may fairly suppose, that Man received by immediate and supernatural Revelation, the Knowledge of some Truths, and why may we not conclude, that, the Knowledge of this Mystery, was conveyed to him, in that way? To the end he might, in his Acts of Devotion, pay those Honours, to the Divine Three, which are the Due of each.

Since Ignorance of God is every where represented, as an Unhappiness to Men, it is unreasonable to think that Man originally was unacquainted with Him.

2. We can't rationally suppose, that he was a Stranger to his Duty, either in the Matter, Manner, or Extent of it. If he had not known what Acts his Maker required of him, it would have been impossible for him to behave himself, agreeably to His Will. Obedience to any Authority, necessarily supposes the Knowledge of what ^{it} enjoins. For, if a Subject happens to act as the Law requires, who has no Knowledge of what is enacted, properly speaking, his Acts would not be Obedience to the Legislator, because he could have no respect to his Will in those Acts, or Intention of shewing his Submission to his Authority in what he acted, which always enters into the Nature of real Obedience to a Superior, in what he commands. And, consequently, Man must know what he ought to practise, and in what manner, and with what Views, the Duties required of him, were to be

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performed; for otherwise, he could not be obedient to the Will of his Maker, in what he did. And, unless he had had this Knowledge of what it was, the Will of God, he should practise, if he had failed of his Duty, or acted contrary to it, no uneasy Consciousness could possibly have took Place in his Mind, upon such Failure, and unlawful Acting. Conscience cannot accuse of Offence, farther than a Perception of what ought to be done, and what ought to be avoided extends. It must, therefore, be concluded, that Man was acquainted with his Duty in the whole Compass of it. As his Understanding was not blinded by any contracted Prejudices, so no natural Defect attended it.

His Mind was then capable of discerning the Objects which claimed his Love, and of seeing those Objects, which it became him to turn from and avoid. His Rejection of the highest Good, and his Choice of Evil, were not the Effects of Ignorance. If he could have pleaded that in his Excuse, we may be certain he had not failed of it, for he discovered an Inclination to lessen his Crime, if that had been possible; but he offers nothing of this kind to extenuate his Guilt. This leads me to observe,

3. He knew wherein his Happiness consisted. If Man in his first Estate had been insensible of the Excellency of that Good, unto which he was entitled so long as he preserved his Integrity, his Folly had not been so great in forfeiting of his Title to it: Neither could

could he have took Pleasure in that Good, while he had it in Possession: For Delight in Good enjoyed, arises from a Perception of the Nature of that Good, and, consequently, Pleasure in it, cannot exceed that Measure of Acquaintance the Mind hath with it, in its Excellency. We cannot, therefore suppose, that *Adam* was ignorant of his present happy Circumstances, in his Creation-State. If he was then happy, he must be sensible, wherein his Felicity consisted.

4. He was not ignorant of that Misery which a Breach of the Law would bring him into. He perfectly knew that Sin against his Maker, would certainly be followed with Consequences fatal to himself. His perfect Reason, could not but discern, that Rebellion against his Sovereign, would expose him to his righteous Displeasure. Ignorance as to this cannot be pleaded in his Excuse. He dared to rebel, with a full Knowledge of the dreadful Effects, of an Act of Rebellion; according to the Appointment of God in the Law.

II. His Disposition was such as God approved of. It is irrational to imagine, that the Mind of Man was not the Subject of any Habits good or evil, as he was created of God, for that supposes, that he was neither holy; nor unholy. The Disposition of his Mind, as he came out of God's Hand, could not be sinful, for that would make God the Author of Sin, and, consequently, he had no Aversion to

Holiness, nor Inclination to Evil, or his Will was not under the Influence of any evil Bias. He then must have a good and holy Disposition. *Adam* was created good in an *ethical* Sense, or else God gave Being to a Creature, which the Purity of his own Nature, would necessarily incline him to disapprove of, and prevent him holding Fellowship with, than which nothing that is more absurd can be supposed. For my Part, I can as soon believe, that Man rose into Existence of himself, as that God formed him, with such Dispositions, as Men universally give Evidence have Place in their Minds. The Absurdity of such an Imagination, I cannot but think must be evident to every one, who is not void of all Consideration, and is not absolutely a Stranger to himself. Is it rational to suppose, that God made Man with such Instability, such Inclinations, such Irregularity and Disorder in his Passions, as are now found with all Men? It may be questioned, whether that Man thinks at all, (if he speaks Truth) who says that, he hath no Experience, nor ever had, of any such Depravity in him, as it is pretended every Man is now the Subject of. For it is hardly possible, that Reason can be exercised without a Discernment, in some Measure, that our reasonable Nature is not, at present, such, as it would be well if it was, — With Respect to some, who confidently assert, that they have no Disposition to Evil, it may partly be owing to Ignorance of themselves, of the Na-

Nature of Holiness, and of Sin; but perhaps, much more to Perverseness and Obstinacy: They may *hardly* deny what they know to be true, rather, than give any Advantage to a Principle, which they are obstinately determined to oppose and run down, at any Rate. That human Nature is now corrupt, is so plain a Truth, that, I cannot be persuaded, that any Man retains Consciousness, who hath no Perception of the *dismal* Fact in himself. And is it not most absurd to imagine, that, God created Man such as he now is? It is not so great a Dishonour to God, to deny that he is the Author of the Being of Man, as it is to assert that he created him such as he now is, in the Temper and Disposition of his Mind. And to suppose, that he formed him without either good or evil Inclinations, or without a Direction in his Will, either to what is good, or to what is evil, is senseless and irrational.

III. His Affections were untainted, and no Disorder attended him in his Passions. No Temptation arose from Vanity seated in the inferior Powers of his Soul, which is the Case with Man in his fallen State. Neither were his Passions tumultuous, and rebellious against his Reason: So that his Sin could not be occasioned by the Impurity of his Affections, nor the Impetuosity of his Passions. No unlawful Love, Delight, or Aversion, were implanted in the Nature of Man by the great Author
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of his Being. And, therefore, the Dictates of his Reason did not meet with Controul from Corruption in his Affections, while he continued innocent. And, consequently, Obedience to the Law of his Maker, was not rendered difficult, by any Unruliness in the Passions of his Soul. Disorder there was the Effect, and not the Cause of his Apostacy. — The Arguments are various, by which this Doctrine of the original Purity of Man is proved.

1. God created him in His own Image and Likeness. And this Image must intend moral Rectitude. Intelligence, or Reason, though it is necessarily included, it is not the principal Thing designed by that divine Likeness, for if Rationality was this Image, it could never be lost. Sin, which defaces this beautiful Image, don't deprive Men or Devils of Intelligence. The Nature of both will eternally continue rational. It is impossible, that either can sink into Brutality; Thought and Consciousness are inseparable from the Nature of both. And, therefore, the Image of God must be something distinct from Reason. Indeed, Reason only can be the Subject of it; but Reason is not the Thing itself. To suppose, that mere Reason is God's Likeness, is an Imagination unworthy of a reasonable Nature; with how much Confidence soever, some pretending unto a superior Degree of Reason, assert that it is. This is a glaring Evidence of their deep Corruption, Depravity, and of their Unacquaintedness, with the true Glory
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of an intelligent Nature, even in Theory. No Censure too great can be passed on an Opinion so senseless, and reproachful to our Maker.

2. Whatever the Law requires of Men now, that was in human Nature originally. Doth not the Law demand Love to God with our whole Hearts? It does. Can we be supposed to love him, without a true Knowledge of him, in his Being, Nature, and Perfections? No: For, such Love is not a blind Passion; but a holy Affection, raised in the Mind by a Perception of His infinite Excellencies. Ignorant Devotion is every whit as good in itself, as undiscerning Affection towards the Deity. Again, the Law requires us to fear and reverence our Maker. And, can there be a Reverence of God, without the Knowledge of Him? No. We may have a Dread of something unknown, and revere a Nature, that we are taught is excellent; but unless we have some Ideas of the Power and Excellency of that Nature, we are afraid of we know not what, and pay Veneration to a Being, or Nature possessed of some supposed Excellencies, but such as we are Strangers unto. So the idolatrous *Athenians* worshipped God. They had this Inscription on one of their Altars, *To the unknown God*. And some Men, if I understand them, would lead us into a Belief of the Possibility of the human Mind exerting Acts of Love, Fear and Reverence of God, without the Knowledge of Him. Since the Law requires these Things of Men, of all Men, cer-
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tain it is, that human Nature in its primitive State, was the happy Subject of a true Knowledge of God, in His Nature, and infinitely glorious Perfections, of a holy Affection to God, and of a Disposition to reverence and fear Him. Nor is any intelligent Nature like unto God, which approves not of Goodness, Truth and Righteousness. The Moment an intelligent Creature ceases to love and delight in these Things, he is stript of his Glory, and becomes depraved in his Understanding, Will and Affections.

3. Man in his original State was the Object of the Approbation of his Maker. This cannot be denied, without the Absurdity of supposing, that God gave Existence to a Creature, which He could not look upon with Satisfaction and Pleasure. Now, if God approved of Man when He had made him, he must be the Subject of such Qualities in his reasonable Nature, as were pleasing to Him. For bare Intelligence is not the Object either of God's Approbation, or Disapprobation. A reasonable Nature, which is the Subject of perfect Holiness, is the Object of God's Delight; and a reasonable Nature depraved and vicious, is the Object of His Displeasure: And, consequently, Man originally was the happy Subject of good Habits, or of Integrity, Righteousness, and a Perfection of Nature; for then nothing could be wanting in him, to render him the fit Object of the Approbation of His Creator.

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4. Regeneration, or our new Creation, is the Implantation of, or giving Being unto holy Principles in our Minds; that is, making the Heart good, in order unto the Performance of good Works. And this is called the Image of God, and it is said to consist in *Righteousness and true Holiness*. And, consequently, the Divine Image is not Intelligence, but Purity and Holiness in an intelligent Nature. Wherein a true Knowledge of God, according to the Nature of the Covenant under which Man is, and Love to Him, Fear of Him, and a Disposition to obey Him, are included.

5. Man was happy in his original State. He not only was free from Pain and Misery, but he enjoyed Delight. And, the Pleasure he had before his Apostacy was of a pure and holy Nature, such as God approved of. If his Mind was not the Subject of perfect Knowledge, according to the Nature of that Covenant, under which he then was: If his Will had not been disposed to Obedience: If his Affections had not been holy and pure, what Pleasure could he possibly take in those Truths, which were contained in the Law, whereunto his Obedience was required? Happiness necessarily supposes Delight, and Delight as necessarily supposes an Agreeableness between the Disposition of the Soul, and the Objects from which its Pleasure springs. Man was happy in Innocency, he, therefore, enjoyed Pleasure, and that Pleasure was pure and holy.

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holy. He then must know Truth, and approve of it.

6. Man in Innocency enjoyed a Sense of Divine Favour, according unto the Nature of the Covenant, which was then made with him. This seems to me so evident a Truth, and so consonant to Reason, that I think it cannot well be called in Question. And if it is true, that *Adam* in that State enjoyed Communion with his Maker, surely he must then be the Subject of heavenly Knowledge and true Holiness. For if not, his Mind would not have been disposed unto Fellowship with God, and he must have been incapable of taking any Pleasure therein. A depraved intelligent Nature is averse to Communion with God: And a Mind which is not the Subject of a holy Disposition, can have no Inclination unto Intimacy with him. If any suppose, that a reasonable Nature, destitute of such a Disposition, may be inclined to Communion with the Father of Spirits, they must be Strangers to that Happiness. Because it includes a Perception of what God is, of the Creature's Relation to him, and that all its Felicity springs from him, and an Adoration of his infinite Perfections. Hence, it necessarily follows, that the Mind of Man originally was not only free from Corruption; but also, that it was the happy Subject of pure and holy Principles, which were concreated with it; for where real Holiness is not, it is impossible that Communion with God can be enjoyed.

7. If

7. If Man by Acts of Obedience had acquired good Habits, he would have been the Author of his chief Excellency, and not God, which it is blasphemous to imagine. God indeed gave him a reasonable Nature; but its Ornament and Beauty would not have been a Divine Gift, the Supposition of which is intolerable Arrogance, and Insolence against the Author of our Beings; and, therefore, Man was certainly created pure and holy. A Mind which is the Subject of good Dispositions, is better than a Mind that is not. The Acquirement, therefore, of such Dispositions, by a Mind destitute of them, must be esteemed an Acquisition of greater Glory, than it before possessed; and, consequently, Man's highest Excellency must have been the Effect of his own Labour, and not of the Bounty of his Creator. This Reasoning is what I think cannot be answered, by those, who deny original Righteousness. But holy Acts can never arise in a Mind destitute of holy Habits. If *Adam*, therefore, was not created with a holy Disposition, he could not have acquired it, because, without it he could not perform holy Acts.

8. Indifference to Good and Evil I think cannot have Place in a reasonable Nature. Indifferency in the Mind can only respect Things indifferent, which are neither good nor evil, if the Mind is supposed to be conversant about Objects, whose Nature is not indifferent. That intelligent Nature certainly
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is not what it ought to be, in whose Account, it matters not, whether Truth or Falshood is embraced, whether Right or Wrong is chosen, and pursued. When the Mind gives the Preference to what is right and fit, and is disposed to that, before its contrary, it is good ; but when it is the Subject of a Disposition to what is unfit, and makes choice of it, then it is depraved. The supposed Indifferency of the human Mind towards its Duty, or the contrary of it, agrees not with the Experience, either of good, or bad Men. It is not found in the Soul of any Man in this World, nor can attend any human Mind in the next World ; and, to conceit that *Adam* was created of God, that which, neither a good Man, nor an evil Man is, is a fond and ridiculous Imagination. That he could not create him with vicious Dispositions all must grant, and, consequently, he made him with good Dispositions, because it is impossible, that Indifferency to Holiness, or Sin, should ever be found in a reasonable Nature ; a Creature disposed neither to Good, nor to Evil, never had real Existence, but only a supposed Being in the foolish Imaginations of some perverse Men.

The just and natural Conclusions, arising from these Things are these, *viz.* That Man in his original State was the happy Subject of moral Perfection, not only free from all Vitiosity and Disorder in his reasonable Nature ; but possessed of positive Holiness, the Object of the Approbation of God, who made him,

him, and made him good, in an *ethical* Sense, for otherwise, he had not been a fit Object of Divine Approbation.—That his Knowledge was complete, or that he was perfectly acquainted with all the momentous Truths contained in that Law, or Covenant, under which he then was. —That he had a Disposition to Good, or a Liking to Truth, Righteousness and Holiness. —That he was capable of holding Fellowship with his Maker, and actually enjoyed a Sense of his Favour. — That, therefore, Pleasures pure and holy sprung up in his Mind, from an Apprehension of an Interest in the Good-will, Care, and bountiful Kindness of his Creator. For, he not only was entertained with a Sight of the pleasing Wonders, that surrounded him above, and on the Earth beneath, especially in that fertile Spot of it wherein he was placed; but also with an Apprehension of the Glory of the Author of the Universe, in that Way, wherein he had then displayed it. *Adam*, therefore, was not only free from Pain, uneasy Consciousness and Misery; but possessed Happiness in a positive Sense, full Satisfaction, Joy and Delight pure and holy, and such as God designs to a pure and perfect Mind. Hence it is apparent, that no vain Thoughts naturally sprung up in the Mind of Man, no unlawful Desires arose in his Soul from an evil Bias in his Will, nor were any natural Tendencies then found in his Affections towards Objects trifling, vain, and hurtful, through Impurity

feated in them. His unclouded and perfect Reason, which clearly discerned what was the Matter of his Duty, and dictated him to the Practice of it, met with no Opposition from Disorder in his Affections; for they were as pure, as his Mind was discerning. Reason in a State of Innocency, as it was at no loss, relating to the Fitness, or Unfitness of the Part it was to act, in any Instance; so it had no rebellious Inclination to subdue and conquer, in order to acting that Part, it knew to be becoming and fit. God did not place Man in such a difficult and disadvantageous Situation. He certainly had all the Advantages which were necessary to facilitate the Practice of what his Maker required him to do. This cannot be scrupled without a Reflection both on the Wisdom and Goodness of his Creator. For, infinite Wisdom and Goodness must needs direct to the Formation of the Creature free from all such corrupt Inclinations, as would render his Duty a Task difficult for him to perform. If Man had found himself to be the Subject of any such Dispositions from the first Moment of his Existence, as were repugnant to his Reason, he would never upon his Apostacy have been silent on that Head; but would certainly have pleaded it, as some Extenuation of his Crime. For, it is evident, that he had an Inclination to have done this on some Pretence or other, if it had been possible. And this would have been a much more plausible Plea, than the shameful one he

he used with his Maker, Law-giver, and Judge; *The Woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the Tree, and I did eat.* He discovered an Inclination to impute his Crime to the Author of his Being; or to prove, that he was the Occasion of it. And such is the impious and daring Conduct of his wretched Descendants in too many Instances. Because Men find themselves to be the Subjects of such Desires, or Tendencies of Mind, as they know to be unfit, and repugnant to Reason, they easily excuse themselves for Errors in Practice, and with frontless Assurance insist upon it, that it will be Cruelty in their Maker, to call them to an Account for those Defects and Blemishes in their Behaviour, which are unavoidable in their present Circumstances. We, therefore, may conclude, with the greatest Certainty, that infinite Wisdom would take care to prevent all Occasion of such like Cavilling in the Formation of Man, that he might not have it to say, that his Duty was difficult to be performed, by reason of an unsuitable Turn in his Will, and Tendency in his Affections, as he was created of God.

And, surely, it is reasonable to conclude, that *Adam* performed devotional Acts with holy Reverence, and sacred Delight. He could not but give Tributes of Praise to God his Maker for his super-abundant Beneficence and Favour towards him, whereby he was furnished with every Thing not only needful to his Sustentation, in those happy Circumstances

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wherein he was placed; but with whatever he could desire for the Entertainment and Delight of his innocent and heavenly Mind, and constituted Ruler and Lord over the numerous Ranks of Creatures the World contains. Above all, his grateful Soul was doubtless possessed of adoring Thoughts, of the Wisdom, Goodness, and Power of his great Creator, and of the Interest he had in his Approbation, Protection and Kindness. And his Principles, natural to him, directed him to implore the Continuance of the Care, Aid, and Guidance of his Almighty Former; wherein his guiltless Soul could not be attended with any Dread of his Terrors, nor with the least Suspicion of a Want of a favourable Regard to him, in the Mind of that infinitely good Being, who made him. And, therefore, what Serenity, what Satisfaction, what Pleasures, must fill the Breast of Man in his primitive State, who had a free Access to his Maker, a Sense of his Favour, and was absolutely free from all Fear of his Displeasure? O happy State indeed!

Besides, his pure and holy Mind was not reluctant and indisposed to religious Services, nor wandering and sluggish in the Performance of them; for then Man was not the Subject of any Aversion to Holiness and Communion with God. And, therefore, Divine Worship must be a Branch of Duty, wherein Man took a peculiar Pleasure in his original State. Perfect Love to the infinitely glorious Object of
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his Worship, sweetly engaged all the Powers of his Soul unto Acts of Adoration, Thanksgiving and Praise. As his Understanding discerned the infinite Excellencies of His Creator, and his Will was free from all evil Biass, it adhered to Him, and his Affections being untainted, embraced and delighted in God His Maker. As has been observed, whatever the Law requires of all Men now, that was in Man originally, the Law commands us to worship our Maker, in a pure, holy, and reverential Manner, without Reluctance, Wandering, and Mixture of Vanity in our Thoughts, Desires and Affections, and, consequently, innocent Man performed Service of that noble and heavenly Kind. If he had not, he never could have claimed a Title to God's Approbation and Favour; but, on the contrary, must have fallen under His Displeasure, and Censure: For if God receives not that Glory from the Creature, which is due unto His holy and great Name, He cannot but resent it. And since the Creature's Happiness consists in the Knowledge of God, in Acts of Love to Him, and in Acts of Obedience to His righteous Will, certain it is, that *Adam* in a Manner perfectly devout and holy worshipped his great Creator.

Hereby we may be induced to enter upon a pleasing Contemplation of the Happiness of the lovely Pair, in the delightful Garden of *Eden*. Two pure Minds were perfectly united in Love, between which no Strife, or Con-

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tention, could arise, to the Disturbance and Vexation of either. *Adam*, on his part, to whom we may allow a Superiority over the innocent and beautiful *Fair*, he certainly was all Affection and Kindness to her, nothing of a stern and angry Disposition appeared in his Air, Language, or in any of his Actions towards her. His Commands, when he gave her any, were no other than such, as proceeded from perfect Reason, Sweetness of Temper, and the truest Affection. And the Woman, on her part, was all Submission to her gentle Ruler, and loving Companion, for whom she was formed, and to whom she was given by her Maker, to attend him, and unite with him, in all Acts of Adoration and Praise to the Former of them both. Perfect Harmony, un-mixed Delight, and untainted Piety reigned in the Breast of each. And the Man, we may suppose, pronounced Orations of the Wisdom, Power, and Beneficence of the great Creator, in her hearing, and that she not less capable of discerning the bright Display of these Divine Perfections in the wonderful Works of Creation, discovered an Approbation of all he expressed, as what perfectly corresponded with her own Ideas on those important Subjects, and unto both transporting!

Socinian and *Arminian* Writers deny this original Perfection and Happiness of Man, because, they think, his Apostacy cannot be explained, if he was the Subject of Purity, and Holiness. They imagine, that his Mind,
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though it was not tainted with moral Evil, yet, that it was not the Subject of those Dispositions before-mentioned, and, consequently, that he could not be so happy a Creature, as we conclude he was. But,

1. It is not a sufficient Reason for the Denial of the Truth of any Thing, which Reason leads us to conclude is true; that Difficulty attends the Explication of some other Thing, which Fact proves is true also. It doubtless is more rational to conclude upon the Truth of what Reason dictates to us must be true, than to deny it, because somewhat afterwards occurs, which we cannot explain, and shew how the latter can consist with the former. Reason plainly proves the Truth of Man's original Purity and Rectitude, and Fact proves the Possibility of his sinning against his Maker, though he formed him holy and happy. It is open Folly in Men, whose Understanding is very much limited in the Explication of Things, which they have a Power of discerning the Truth of, to deny the Truth of any Thing, merely because they find themselves unable to explain how another Thing is true, which Fact undeniably proves to be so.

2. The greatest Perfection which a Creature can be the Subject of, raises him not above a Possibility of acting an unwise and sinful Part: For his Nature can't be rendered immutable. It is inseparable from the Nature of a Creature, as a Creature, to be liable to

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change. As it is of the Nature of God to be unchangeable, who necessarily is what he is, and to whom it is impossible ever to be in his Nature other than he is. Deity alone is above the Possibility of a Change. And, therefore, unto what Height soever you raise the Perfection of the Creature, Man, in his original State, you place him not above the Possibility of a Mutation. That cannot be without Blasphemy, or making him equal unto God, in what he always challenges, as a peculiar Property of his Nature: *I am the Lord, I change not.* He is the *Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of Turning.*

3. I apprehend, that it is not merely on Account of this Difficulty, that these Men deny the Doctrine of Man's original Holiness; but for another Reason also, *viz.* Man's Apostacy, though he was perfectly holy, proves the Necessity of the Super-addition of Divine Grace immutably to preserve the pure Creature in a State of Perfection. This is what they are unwilling to grant, because they will have it, that the continued Happiness of the Creature depends on his Acts, without a determining Influence from the Grace of God. If they were to allow of such an Influence on the Mind of a perfect Creature, they could not consistently insist upon it, that such an Influence on the Mind of an imperfect Creature destroys its free Agency, which is what
they

they constantly and vehemently urge against it.

4. Since Mutability, or a Possibility of Change, is true of the most holy Creature, that Creature may sin and involve himself in Ruin, if God withholds confirming Grace from him. And, this was the Case with Man in Innocency: His Nature was holy; but not immutably so, and as God withheld his determining Influence from *Adam*, and left him to the Mutability of his own Will, he made an unhappy Choice. Obedience to the Law was not beyond the Powers of his Nature, for God did not require Impossibilities of him; but the holy Habits of his Mind were insufficient infallibly to influence it unto Acts of Obedience. Power to obey the Divine Command is one Thing, that he had, and Power to preserve the Will infallibly, in a continued Choice of Duty, is another and farther Thing; this latter he had not, and God withholding from him confirming Grace, which is necessary unto the Creature's invariably chusing to practise its Duty, or continuing rightly to use that Power it hath, he violated the Law of his Maker. Ability to perform Acts of Duty a perfect Creature hath; but Ability infallibly to persevere therein, he hath not, because his Mind is mutable in its Nature, and consequently, how holy soever the Creature is, he is not raised by his inherent Principles, above a Possibility of Sinning against God. And there is Reason to conclude, that he certainly

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certainly will, without supernatural Grace, from the Fall of Angels, and the Apostacy of Man, who were created pure and holy.

5. Those who deny the irresistible, or the effectual Operation of God on the human Mind, because they fear that such an Influence destroys its free Agency, must be obliged according to their Opinion to maintain, that the Saints in Heaven continue happy, by Virtue of inherent Principles, and not in Consequence of a determining Act of the Divine Will upon their Wills, to prevent their making at any Time an evil Choice, which is highly derogatory to the Glory of Divine Grace. They allow indeed, that God makes the Saints perfectly holy; but they must assert, that they preserve themselves in a State of Holiness and Happiness for ever. And they will not grant, that Man, originally, was the Subject of that Perfection, Purity and Holiness which it is reasonable to conclude he was, lest an Argument should be formed from thence, in Confirmation of the Necessity of such an Influence from God on the perfect Creature, in order infallibly to preserve his Holiness and Happiness. So cautious are they of yielding any thing to the Prejudice of their Dunghill-Idol Free-Will. That must stand, whatever falls. That is their governing Principle, and their whole Scheme of Divinity, is so framed, as not to injure in the least Degree this *Diana* of theirs. By this they govern themselves in forming their Sentiments

timents of Man before his Fall, of human Nature, as fallen, of Men unconverted, of Men converted, and of the Saints in Heaven. Of so extensive an Influence is this unworthy filthy Brat of their own begetting. And so enamoured are they with it, that they care not what is lost, so that is but safe. They are determined to do Homage to this favourite Principle, at the Expence of every Thing else. Perhaps, some would propound a Question relating to this Subject: And enquire thus; why should evil Habits have greater Influence on the Mind, than good Habits? Or why should evil Habits prevent holy Acts arising in the Mind, since good Habits, whereof the Mind of Man it is supposed was the Subject, did not prevent a sinful Act in him? I answer,

1. Sin is the Consequence of Mutability in the Nature of a Creature. If good Habits infallibly determined the Will to the Choice of Good: The Creature's Continuance in a State of Happiness would be independent on an Act of the Divine Will, and its Influence upon the Will of the Creature, which it is *impious* to imagine the Possibility of. And, therefore, good Habits can have no such Influence on the Will of a Creature, as infallibly to determine it to make a wise and fit Choice. But though the most perfect Creature, may, possibly, change for the worse, because of its natural Mutability, it by no Means follows, that a sinful Creature, may effect a
Change.

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Change in itself for the better, or perform holy Acts.

2. If a Creature, which is the Subject of evil Habits only, could will Holiness, it would then be in the Power of the sinful Creature to raise itself out of its miserable State, and regain that Happiness, which it lost by Sin; but that is impossible.

The Creature is the Cause of its Misery; but God alone is the Author of its Salvation and Recovery; I suppose, that all such will acknowledge the Truth of this Reasoning, who are persuaded of the inseparable Connection between Holiness and Happiness. If the sinful Creature may become holy of itself, I think it is certain, that it may by an innate Power become happy also.

3. Evil may be chosen under a false Notion, or under the Appearance of Good. But Holiness can't be chosen, except as Holiness, and because of its Excellency. Such a Choice the depraved Creature cannot make, for two Reasons: One is, his Understanding discerns not the excellent Nature of Holiness. The other is, his Mind is Enmity against it, as Holiness, and, consequently, it cannot be the Matter of his Choice.

4. The Law denounces Wrath and Misery against the Sinner, and, therefore, it is impossible, that an apostate Creature should ever recover its Holiness, and regain its Happiness. When it doth the former, it also will the latter; for no holy Creature will ever be rendered

rendered miserable, by infinite Holiness and infinite Goodness. God's Delight in Holiness is such, that, if the Devil becomes holy, I dare say, he will immediately cease to be miserable. Hence we may observe,

1. If Man was overcome by Temptation, when he had no corrupt Habits in his Mind; but had holy Dispositions in his Soul: How foolish is it to think, that, now he is depraved, he stands not in need of powerful, special, and effectual Grace from God to make him holy, and preserve him in the midst of the numerous Temptations, which continually and in every Condition attend him? If the natural Mutability of his Will, in a State of Perfection, rendered it so easy for Satan to conquer and slay him: Is it not absurd to imagine, that he can defend himself, now his Heart is possessed of Enemies more dangerous by far, which are always disposed to join with him, in whatever Temptations he presents? It certainly is. The Fall of our first Parents ought to teach us Humility, and a constant Dependence on Divine Grace for our Safety, unto which it is wholly owing.

2. Sovereign Goodness alone provides for; and secures the lasting Felicity of Angels and Men. Angels owe their standing unto Favour beyond what is due unto a Creature. God is not obliged to preserve the Will of any Creature from making an improper Choice; by his determining Influence upon it. Holiness is the intelligent Creature's Due, in his Creation,

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tion, on the Foot of Equity ; but none have a farther Claim upon God. If, therefore, he affords additional Aid in order to prevent his Creatures from Sinning, through the Mutability of their Wills, it is the mere Effect of his sovereign Goodness. Unto this the Saints owe their Security in Heaven. Invariable Happiness rests on a certain and infallible Cause, which the Will of the holiest Creature is not. Immutability can no more take Place in the Will of a Creature, than any other Perfection can, which is peculiar to the Nature of God.

3. What a low Notion the *Socinians* and *Arminians* have of Rectitude, Righteousness, and the Image of God. I must needs say, that though they pretend to be zealous for Holiness above others, their false Notions about it, is one of the principal Objections I have against their Sentiments. This I know, that as there was more in Man, in Innocency, than they will allow of: So more is required to be in Men, in order to the Enjoyment of Happiness hereafter, than they judge necessary hereunto. A Man may carry to Hell along with him, that which they call a Preparation for Heaven. And I am sure, if their Experience, as to Holiness, is not beyond their Notions of it, they will never come there.

4. How greatly was the Sin of Man aggravated? It was committed against Knowledge, and under great Advantages, through the Beneficence of the Object against whom it was directed, after Warning given, and an
 explicite


explicite Declaration of the Consequence of his Transgression. In his Crime there was Presumption, Unbelief, horrid Ingratitude, and Rebellion against the most just, the most kind, and the most beneficent Ruler. How dreadful, therefore, was his Offence? No Circumstance was wanting in it, which could aggravate it.

5. Since God shewed him Mercy, as we have Reason to conclude he did, what Encouragement may we collect from hence to hope for Favour, under the deepest Sense of our Unworthiness?

6. How should we adore the rich Mercy and Grace of God, which hath provided for the Recovery of lapsed Men? He was under no more Obligation to rebellious Man, than to apostate Spirits. And, therefore, he might as justly have left Men, who are the sinful Descendants of *Adam*, eternally to perish, as he has those Angels that sinned. Can we seriously think of this without Wonder, Admiration, and Praise! If we have any spiritual Sense, and Ingenuity in our Minds, we can't.

C H A P. II.

*Of the present Depravity of
Human Nature.*


 ANY seem to take a *peculiar* Pleasure in extolling of human Nature, and give such a Representation of the State of Mankind, as is plainly a Contradiction both to Scripture and *universal* Experience. Because, Man, still continues intelligent, and hath a Power of willing and nilling, of loving and hating, which is essential to his Constitution and Make, and, therefore, can never be lost, without his ceasing to be Man, they persuade themselves, and would fain make others believe also, that human Nature is not much, if any Thing, a Sufferer by the Fall. Hence, they are exceedingly lavish in their Encomiums, and groundless flattering Applauses of the human Excellency. The Depravation of our Nature, is not the Loss of Intelligence; but of that Ability to exert itself in a wise and fit manner, which it originally possessed. And therefore,

When we assert the Necessity of the Communication of Divine Grace, in order to our acting in a holy, and fit manner, we do not suggest, that we are passive in doing good,

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nor that we are acted as *Machines* and *Puppets*, which have not Intelligence, and, consequently, neither Perception, nor Volition, nor Pleasure, in, or about any Objects, towards which they are impelled to move. Those who object either the one, or the other to us, plainly discover the Want of due Attention to what we say, or a Defect in their boasted Intellectuals, or a Want of Fairness and Ingenuity in their Reasoning.

Our Depravity is a Subject very largely treated of in the holy Scriptures. And it is only the Light of Revelation, which can guide us into the Knowledge of the true Nature, and Extent of that Depravation, which attends us. The following Particulars are clearly taught, and strongly inculcated, in those Writings.

I. We are dead in Sin. Death is not a Decay of Vigour and Strength, through Sickness, Disorder, or Wounds; but a Privation of Life, taken in a natural Sense, as the Body is the Subject of it. And in a religious View, as the Mind is the Subject of Death, it is not a Diminution of Power for acting in a holy Manner, but a total Loss and Privation of that Power. The Life we lost by Sin, is not that Spiritual Principle, which flows from new Covenant-Love; but that Principle of Holiness, which was concreated with Man, and was con-natural to him. Men indeed, are without the former; but it is in a way of Negation only, not by Privation, as they are

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of the latter. Human Nature in its original State, was not the Subject of the former, and consequently, it could not be lost by Man's Apostacy. Since we are deprived of this Principle of Holiness, in Consequence of Sin, we must be incapable of performing that Obedience the Law requires of us. And much more must we be unable to act in a spiritual Manner, about and towards spiritual Objects and Things, to whose Nature the new Creature is congruous, and upon which it acts itself.

II. We are under the Dominion of Sin. Whatever is intended by this Phrase, it is true of all those who are under the Law*. Hence we must conclude, that the Tyranny of Sin is of universal Extent, for all Men are in Subjection to the Law, considered as the Descendants of *Adam*. The Phrase necessarily supposes, that Sin hath Possession of the Soul, for, the Mind certainly is the Subject of that, under whose Direction and Influences its acts, whether it be a good or evil Principle. Besides, it evidently suggests, that the Mind is in Subjection to Evil, as a governing Principle, which determines it in all its Volitions and Acts. This Rule of Sin is not a Force upon the Mind, to which it makes Opposition, for the Soul is a Subject, and not a Captive to Evil. It can't but will Evil, *through the* Reign of Sin, yet all its evil Volitions are spontaneous and free.

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* Rom. vi. 14.

The Dominion of Sin consists in its determining Influence upon the Will. And this Sway over the Mind it keeps, until victorious Grace makes a Conquest upon the Soul, by the Implantation of a contrary Principle, (which opposes the Influence of Sin, and disposes the Will to contrary Acts) let Conscience remonstrate ever so sharply against the fatal Choice Sin inclines the Will to make.

This is not a Propensity to some particular Evil; but an Inclination to deviate from the Rule of our Duty, taken in its full Compass. Yet, as the Mind is incapable of exerting itself all Manner of ways, and about all Sorts of Objects at once, and in one instant, it is sometimes acting in one Manner, and sometimes in another, as it is variously affected by the different Objects, about which it is conversant; but all its Actions are evil. And those, who study their own Hearts most, will best understand the surprizing Variety of Ways, wherein evil Concupiscence acts its Part in the Soul.

In the several Stages of human Life, this reigning Power of Sin discovers itself. In Childhood, by Follies proper to that Age. In Youth it exerts itself in various Ways, by a low Ambition, Pride, and a strange Fondness for sinful Pleasures. In the State of Manhood, by a Pursuit of the transitory Things of this World, and this is often under specious Pretences of more extensive Usefulness; but in Fact, Men are acted by a Spirit of

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Covetousness. In an advanced Age, by Impatience, &c.

III. Ignorance and Darkneſs have overſpread our Minds. As a Perſon who hath not a Power of ſeeing, is incapable of being impreſſed by the ſtrongeſt Rays of Light, which any Bodies reflect upon him, and muſt be unable to form Ideas of their Appearance: So Men, naturally, by Reaſon of the Blindneſs of their Minds, cannot diſcern the Nature of heavenly Things. Hence, the Notions which they form about them are diſſonant to their Nature, and they think them to be the very Reverse, of what in Fact they are. The higheſt Wiſdom they account Folly: And Objects the moſt glorious, and attractive, when view'd, as they are in themſelves, they deſpiſe and reject, as having in their Account nothing of the amiable and charming in them. *The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, they are Fooliſhneſs to him, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* In which Words, are theſe Things obſervable. 1. The Perſon ſpoken of, a Man who is not the Subject of ſomething ſupernatural, which might entitle him to a more raiſed Character than that of natural, which is incluſive of all thoſe Accompliſhments, that are to be acquired by Inſtruction, Reading, and the moſt aſſiduous Meditation. 2. The Things of the Spirit of God, *i. e.* Chriſtian Doctrines, which are Fooliſhneſs to him, he diſcerns not any Thing of Wiſdom

dom in them, they seem to him the Reverse, and, therefore, he despises them, as a rational Man ought to contemn what is absurd and foolish. 3. He cannot know them, *i. e.* the Things themselves, though he may the Truth of them. 4. The Reason is, they are spiritually discerned.

This Incapacity of understanding Divine Mysteries, is common to all unregenerate Persons. But in some, it is greatly heightened, by the Influence of Satan, who hath blinded the Minds of them that believe not, and by various strong Prejudices of their own contracting, through Pride, and a vain Elation of Mind, supposing themselves equal to the Discovery of every Branch of Truth, that is necessary to be known, in order to their Happiness. And, sometimes, this Darknes is increased, by a judicial Act of God, giving them wholly over to follow the Dictates of their own corrupt, and distempered Minds.

IV. Men are obstinate. The unyielding Disposition of the human Mind to heavenly Things, is beyond Expression. On this Account, the Heart is compared to a *Stone*, to a *Rock*, and the Neck to an *Iron Sinerw*. We not only want Ability to perform what is good; but a Will and Inclination to it also. The most pathetic Intreaties, and moving Expostulations, cannot entice the Mind to close with what is absolutely necessary to its solid Peace, and final Happiness: Nor the most awakening Threats, and thundering Menaces

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force the Will to retract the evil Choice it has once made. An un sanctified Mind will for ever risque the Loss of the chiefest Good, and suffering the greatest Misery, to gratify its sinful Desires. And numerous are the evasive, and deceitful Reasonings it will use to prevent a Sense of this its Stupidity being fixed on it, to the Disturbance of so ruinous a Security.

As Men are without Ability to come to Christ, and submit to his Authority, which is their Misery: So they will not come to him, that they might have Life; but they reject him by a positive Act of Opposition against him, in the Character of a Saviour, and this is their Guilt, and will add to the Weight of their Punishment. There is such a settled Aversion in the Mind to Holiness in them, that it will never be drawn, by the alluring Promises of Happiness, nor be driven by the awful Denunciations of Death and everlasting Misery to subject itself to the Law. Enmity which the carnal Mind is against God and his Law, will never be soothed, or terrified into the Love of either. *The carnal Mind is Enmity against God; it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be* *.

The Seeds of all Vice are in all Men, though all Vices are not predominant in the Conduct of any Man. *Seneca* gives us his Testimony to this Truth †. Some Things may be

* Rom. viii. 7.

† Omnia in omnibus Vitia sunt: sed non omnia in singulis extant. De Benef. Lib. iv. cap. 7.

be proposed to Consideration to confirm it.
1. The unregenerate Mind approves not of any Branch of Holiness the Law enjoins; but is contrary to it. 2. Nor does it disapprove of any Sin, as Sin, or as it is a Breach of the Divine Law. Under some other Considerations it may dislike of particular Vices. 3. That which disposes to the Breach of one Divine Precept, is not inclined to keep any upon the Authority of the Legislator. 4. Some Vices are predominant in one Man, and others in another; one is immersed in sensual Pleasures; another, who despises them as low and sordid, is carried by a Torrent of intellectual Vices, which, though they are more secret, are not less criminal. One Man is proud, another is covetous. One is envious, another is malicious and wrathful. 5. Different Vices act their Part in the very same Person, at different Times, and under different Temptations and Circumstances: So, you shall see the same Person, sometimes covetous, and sometimes profuse; sometimes fearful and diffident; sometimes presuming and rash. These Things fully prove, that, Men are the Subjects of a Disposition to violate the Law in every Part of it, and that they have not an Inclination to obey any Part of it. For, 6. That in Man which inclines him to neglect any Duty is disposed to none: And that which prompts him to one unlawful Action, will lead him on under a different Temptation to another of a different Kind, how much soever he may

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fancy himself averſe to it. The Reason is evident, a Diſpoſition to any Vice, ſenſual or intellectual, is wholly evil in its Nature, and, therefore, it will betray a Perſon into the Commiſſion of any unlawful Action, when, and as, it is influenced by various Temptations. For, though it is not poſſible, that the Fleſh ſhould gratify itſelf at once, in all the Ways it can act, it will not reſuſe the Gratification of its various Luſts at different Times, and by different Acts.

V. No unregenerate Perſon acts agreeably to the Law in any Inſtance. It is allowed, that he may perform what is materially good, and decline what is materially evil, in many Particulars, and thereby, obtain the Character of a virtuous Man; but, yet, not having in his Heart a Principle of Holineſs, which alone, is the Spring of Actions, that are properly good, and pleaſing to God, nothing he acts correſponds with the Rule of his Duty, with reſpect to its Motives, nor its Source, nor its End. To conceit, that holy Acts may ariſe from natural Principles, and be performed, by natural Powers, is an Imagination, which entirely everts the Grace of the Goſpel, and totally nullifies the Diſtinction, between Perſons regenerate, and unregenerate. If this may be admitted, it is moſt certain, that Regeneration is unneceſſary, the Conſequence is clearly diſcerned, and thoſe Actings of the Mind, which are the genuine Fruits of that gracious Work of God upon Men, are boldly pronounced

nounced *enthusiastic* and *irrational* by many, who put in their Claim for the Name of Christians. To such a Height is Men's Contempt of Divine Grace advanced, in our *sad* Times.

Holiness, in general, is a Submission to God's Authority in the Law: Or, it is an Approbation of the commanding Will of God. And this necessarily supposes a Subjection unto his Authority in every Branch of Duty. A holy Mind declines whatever God forbids, and chuses to practise all he requires, without any Exception. Nothing short of this is *true* Holiness. If, therefore, we approve not of our Duty in its full Extent, we are greatly mistaken, if we imagine, that we have a real Liking unto any Part of it. A Person, who hath no Principle of Holiness in him, may be disinclined to many Vices, and be disposed to practise various Virtues, as he discerns the former are *unfit* Actions; and the latter are comely and fit Actions in themselves; but his Disapprobation of Vice, and Approbation of Virtue, arise not from a Disposition to submit to the Will of God in the Law, and, therefore, his Dislike of Vice is not universal, nor is his Liking of Virtue of that Extent. Whereas, a Man imprincipled with real Holiness, his Aversion to Evil and Choice of Good are of the same Compass with the Law in its Prohibitions and Precepts. Where there is not an universal Approbation of Duty, there is not a *real* Liking of any Part of it, as
Duty.

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Duty. If our Minds submit not unto the Will of God in all he commands, we submit not to his Authority in any Thing which he enjoins.

And if a Man hates Sin, as Sin, or as it is contrary to the Will of God, his Abhorrence of Evil must be of the same Compass, as the Law is, in its Prohibitions. But if his Aversion to Evil springs from other Considerations, how great soever that Aversion may be to some particular Sins, it extends not unto all Sin, nor is it a Dislike of any Sin, as Sin; but as an Action followed with some Inconveniencies, which he chuses to avoid, or at best, as an Action unbecoming a Creature of his *Make* and *Rank*. Wherein, there is no true Hatred of Sin, as such. Abhorrence of Evil, as Evil, supposes an Acquaintance with the exceeding Sfulness of Sin, which produces in the Mind a Dislike of it, because of the Malignity and Vileness of its Nature: And, where that is, the Opposition unto it certainly is universal. Indulgence cannot be given unto any Lust, either of the Flesh, or of the Mind. But, on the contrary, if the Heart is not wrought up unto an Abhorrence of Sin, as Sin, it will be for sparing some cursed Lust, or another, under some Pretence or other, either that it is but a *small* Offence, and no *great* Harm is in it; or, that it will hereafter part with it, and give it up to be slain in a *future Time*; or, that God is not so *rigorous*, as not to connive at some little Gratifications of our strong Desires. Ten thousand

stand Ways the Flesh hath of pleading for itself against the Dictates of the Conscience, and it will surely prevail in the Issue in some Degree, or other, unless a Person hates Sin, as Sin.

Besides, Grace only qualifies a Person for performing holy and acceptable Obedience. Until heavenly Light is infused into our Minds, we discern not the Nature of that Obedience which God requires of us, as Christians: That is not a legal, but evangelical Obedience. The Matter of it is indeed contained in the Law, if not *formally*, yet *radically*; but the Motives to it, and the Ends of it, are such as the Law is unacquainted with, and gives us no Direction about. Those Ends of Obedience which are proper to the Law, respecting us, are our Justification and Life by it, which are incompatible with the Gospel; for that is a Revelation of the Acceptance of our Persons, and of our Right to Life, upon another Foundation. Now, before a Man is furnished with a spiritual Understanding of the Gospel-Way of Justification, he acts in direct Contradiction to the Righteousness of God in the Law, and unto his Grace in the Gospel. For, though he cannot yield such Obedience as the Law requires, he proposes to obtain Justification by what he acts, which Proposal is contrary unto the Righteousness of God in the Law, for that requires sinless Obedience unto that End; and in this Proposal, he openly renounces the Gospel of Christ, or
submits

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Submits not unto that Righteousness of God, which is revealed in the Gospel *from Faith to Faith*. And, therefore, his Obedience cannot be accepted with God, or entitle him unto Life.

That Obedience which flows from Faith in Christ, in a poor Sinner, only is acceptable to God. *For, without Faith it is impossible to please God.* The Reasons of which are evident; In this Obedience, the Equity and Justice of God are heartily acknowledged, in requiring a perfect Observance of his holy Commands, in order to Justification and Life. And, therein, a Person approves of God's gracious Method of justifying and saving miserable Sinners, alone by and through the Mediation of *Jesus Christ*. Wherein, his Grace, Wisdom and Justice most conspicuously shine, which his Soul humbly adores. Besides, this Obedience is an Effect of Gratitude, for the many great and inestimable Blessings, God in a Way of mere sovereign Goodness and Mercy bestows upon unworthy Creatures, and it is chearfully and voluntarily performed. A Man is sweetly drawn by a Sense of Love, and not driven by the Terrors of the Law in what he acts. Whereas, an Unbeliever, in his Acts of Obedience, proposes to make God a Debtor to himself, thereby, although his Obedience is far, very far from being such as the Law demands to that End, which is one of the highest Acts of Rebellion against the Righteousness and Justice of God, in the Character

rafter of a Lawgiver, that a Sinner can be guilty of. Farther, this is not a Choice of Duty, as such ; but only in a certain Respect, and so far as Regard to Self-interest enters into it, which Frame of Mind God abhors.

VI. If it is a Truth, that Persons who are born again, act in a holy spiritual Manner, only according to that spiritual Principle, which is wrought in them, at the Time of their Regeneration ; then, no Actions of an unregenerate Man are good and holy. But Scripture and Experience concur, in giving Evidence, that this is true. The Flesh serves the Law of Sin, and that which is engaged in the Service of Sin, will never be brought to enter into the Service of God. It is in its Nature to oppose the spiritual Part, in all its Motions and Acts. *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit.* And, therefore, the Heart of a Believer is never wholly holy in any of his Actings ; but Imperfections, and a Tincture of Evil, attend his best Performances, by reason of the continual Presence of the Law of Sin, whereof he is the Subject. And, consequently, such who are unregenerate, have no Spring of holy Actions in them ; hence, it must be concluded, that nothing they do can be holy and acceptable to God.

That an unregenerate Person is the Subject of evil Habits only is a clear Case. For, if an unregenerate Man hath good Principles in him, there can be no Difference between a Man, who is in a regenerate State, and one who

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who is not. Persons born again are the Subjects of evil Habits, as well as of good Habits; and, therefore, if an unregenerate Person hath good Principles in him, which dispose him unto good and holy Acts, all Difference between a Man that is born of God, and one who is not, must necessarily be sunk and lost. Because a regenerate Man is no more, nor other than he is, *viz.* the Subject of Holiness and Sin; to suppose which, is absurd and contradictory unto the whole Current of sacred Writ. Again, upon this Principle, Regeneration is not necessary, nay, it is impossible that it can pass upon a Man, who is holy in the Temper, and Disposition of his Mind; for, that Work, is the Production of somewhat in a Person, which before he was not the Subject of; and that must be Holiness, because God is the Author of it; except there may be a Birth, when nothing is produced, which is contradictory to Reason. Regeneration is absolutely necessary to every Man's final Happiness, and, consequently, no Man is holy before he is regenerated. All Men, therefore, are void of Holiness, as a Principle, or Spring of Action, that is naturally, and of course, no Man until he is renewed in the Spirit of his Mind, can yield an holy Obedience unto God. An unregenerate Man is in the Flesh, and cannot please God. He is wholly Flesh, or hath nothing of Spirit in him, from which spiritual Acts can arise, such as Faith, Hope, Love, and Reverence of God.

VII. The

VII. The carnal Mind is Enmity against God. By the carnal Mind is intended, a Soul destitute of the Spirit and Grace of God, or which is in the Flesh, and, therefore, cannot please God. Men may dispute, as long as they think fit; but they will never be able to prove, that any unregenerate Mind is other than Flesh, whether it is drenched in sensual Lusts, or no. All Men in a State of Unregeneracy are Enmity against God. He is the Object of their Aversion. I sometimes, indeed, hear good, wise, and learned Men, in *popular* Addresses to Sinners, tell them, that they can't believe, that they will care to say, that they do not desire to have any Thing to do with God; but, that they are willing to gratify some Lust, or another, which is the Reason why they are for postponing Acquaintance with God, and pathetically expostulate with them on this Head, inform them, that *this is the accepted Time*, and that *this is the Day of Salvation*, and with great Earnestness labour to convince them of their Folly, in putting off until another Season, a Choice of God and real Happiness, for the sake of any unlawful Gratifications. This arises from the Want of a due Consideration, of the dreadful Truth, that the Language of the Hearts of Sinners, unto the Almighty, is, *Depart from us; we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways*. The Fact is really this; Men chuse Lust, because they are not disposed unto a Choice of God and Holiness,

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lineſs, and not that they neglect to make Choice of God, becauſe they chuſe Sin. A Mind which chuſes not God, certainly chuſes Sin, of that there can be no doubt. But the Reaſon why a Man chuſes not God, is not becauſe he chuſes Sin; but he chuſes Sin, becauſe he chuſes not God, through an Alienation of Mind from him. And I obſerve, that the very ſame Perſons, who thus expoſtulate with Sinners, when they are treating on different Subjects, plainly tell them, that they cannot underſtand, and make choice of ſpiritual Things, through the Blindneſs of their Minds, and a fixed Averſion in their Hearts unto thoſe Things: And ſo they allow of the Truth of what, when diſcourſing on ſome other Subjects, they vehemently declare, that they cannot be perſuaded is true. The Conſiſtency of theſe Things, I have no Diſcernment of, nor is it in my Power to reconcile Contradictions. Alas! the *difmal* Faſt is this, our Hearts are eſtranged from God, are Enmity againſt him, and are by no means willing to have any thing to do with him, nor with what is acceptable, and pleaſing to him. And, therefore, there is nothing *ſo vain, ſo trifling*, nay, *ſo pernicious*, that we chuſe not, rather than God, and Holineſs. Nor is it poſſible to perſuade a depraved Mind, to believe that its Happineſs, conſiſts in a Senſe of the Favour of God, and in a Conformity to his holy Will, and, conſequently, to prevail with it to chuſe God and Holineſs, by the higheſt Strains of Rhetoric,

Rhetoric such can use, who are best qualified for striking the Passions of Mankind, in the Manner of their Address.

Men's Enmity against God appears in a Variety of Ways. They like not to think of him, as he is an infinitely holy and pure Being, and necessarily hates Sin, and disapproves of the Persons of Sinners, nor, as he is a sovereign Being, and, consequently, may dispense of his Favours according to his absolute Pleasure, with Respect to the guilty Creature, that he may either save or destroy Transgressors, just as it seems good in his Sight. And, as Men like not to think of God, so they take no Pleasure in discoursing on him. No Subject of Conversation is so unacceptable to Men in general, as God is, especially, in the Purity of his Nature, the Strictness of his Justice, and his infinite Displeasure with Sin; these are Things, which they hope are not true, which is the very same, as hoping that there is no God. The Denial of these Divine Perfections amounts unto a Denial of Deity. And, he, who takes a secret Pleasure, in thinking that God is not so holy, so *inflexibly* just, and so displeased with Sin, as his Word represents him, wishes there was no God. For it is the same Thing, if we desire, that we may not find him to be, what he really is, *viz.* in Purity, Holiness, Justice and Righteousness, as to wish that he were not.

Enmity against God appears in an Opposition to his Law, in the Extent and Spirituality

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tuality of its Precepts, and in the Terror of its Threatnings for a Breach of its Commands. Its Requirements are thought too *strict*, and its Menaces too *severe*, by the carnal Mind. God's Authority in commanding is despised, and his Justice in denouncing Punishment, is censured, as *cruel*. The carnal Mind will not acknowledge the Equity of Divine Precepts, in their full Compass, nor the Justice of Divine Comminations for a Failure of Obedience, in that Extent, which the Law requires. Men who oppose the Sovereignty of the Grace of God, in the Gospel, are Enemies to his Authority, in the Law, and will always so be. Such, who think, that saving Grace must be of universal Extent, always judge, that it is fit and proper, that the Law should be dispensed with, in the *Rigour* of its Commands. And they often break out into *ungodly* and *hard* Speeches, against both the Justice of God in the Law, and his Sovereignty, in the Gospel. Because, according to the former, they are obnoxious to eternal Misery; and according to the latter, Salvation cannot possibly be of themselves, either in Whole, or in Part; but is entirely resolved into the free Will of God, without any moving Consideration in them. Men can neither be reconciled to the Holiness of God, in the Constitution of the Law, nor to his Grace, in the Constitution of the Gospel. He who is an Enemy to the latter, he also is so to the former.

I think, that this natural Opposition of the human Mind to God and Goodness, may be strongly argued from the Motions and Actings of the unregenerate Part in Believers. What their Minds are according to that Part, that the Hearts of the unregenerate wholly are, as to spiritual Things. Now, the Flesh in the Saints opposes the Actings of the spiritual Part in them, and it raises other Thoughts, other Desires, and other Delights in the Mind, and is conversant with other Objects, than Grace is; hence are all their Wanderings in Duty, their Backwardness unto it, and Weariness of it. The Flesh is not for holding Fellowship with God, He is the Object of its Aversion, and it too often diverts the Mind from the Object it hath no Delight in; but is averse from. This it is, which renders it so difficult to contemplate heavenly Things without Distraction, and Tergiversations of Soul. And, if it is thus with sanctified Persons, through the Influence of the Carnal Part, unto the Truth of which *sad* Experience universally testifies, it necessarily follows, that the Heart of an un sanctified Person, is *all* Opposition to God and Holiness. And by how much the more any Duty is spiritual, or how much the more nearly God is to be treated with therein, by so much the more our Hearts are disinclined unto it. He is the most happy Man living, who meets with the least Interruption from the Flesh in his Contemplations on God, in his Approaches unto him, and in Com-

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munion with him, let his Circumstances, as a Man, be what they may.

And, hence we may learn, that the Carnal Mind hath no Desire of possessing Heaven. Many delude their Souls as to this Matter, and think, that they desire the Happiness of that State who have no Love to God, nor the least Pleasure in heavenly Objects. None are willing to suffer the Torments of Hell, but they are Few who have any Relish for the Joys of Heaven. Let us not deceive ourselves in an Affair of such Importance. If we now have no Pleasure in Thoughts of God, of *Jesus Christ*, and of the Mysteries relating to his Person, and Offices, and Work, and precious Benefits, we certainly have no Disposition to enjoy heavenly Glory; nor is it possible, that we should take any Delight in the Fellowship subsisting in that State, or in the pure spiritual Service, which is performed, by the happy Inhabitants of that blissful World. Our Hearts are certainly averse from heavenly Objects, heavenly Communion, and heavenly Service. If we form a Conclusion, that we desire Heaven, merely because we are afraid of Hell, we are under a dreadful Deception. We may tremble at an Apprehension of suffering the Vengeance of God, when we have no Desire of enjoying a Sense of his Favour.

If Men are not Swearers, or unclean Persons, nor Drunkards, nor Thieves, they are very apt to flatter themselves, that all is well, that they are in a safe and happy State: *They are pure in their own Eyes; but they are not washed*

washed from their Filthiness. This is a sad Delusion. Many who act not a *brutal* Part; frequently act a *diabolical* one. They wallow not in the Mire of *sensual* Lusts; but they are under the Sway of *intellectual* Lusts, Pride, Covetousness, Wrath, Anger, Malice, Contempt of others, who, perhaps, in no Sense, are their Inferiors, appear in them to the Observation of almost every Spectator. Can we think, that such Sort of Persons are holy and good? We must be as much unacquainted with both Sin and Holiness, as they themselves are, if we do. I must needs say, that no Persons are more Strangers unto real Holiness, than some, who despise others, because they imagine, that they excel them therein. They often say to such, who are truly sanctified, *stand by thyself, come not near to me, I am holier than thou*, whereas in Fact, they are as distant from true Holiness, as any Persons in the World be. The proud Pharisee, while he swells with an Opinion of his superior Merit, is no other than a Slave, though not to sensual, yet to intellectual Lusts. No Persons are more remote from Holiness, than some who scorn to indulge sensual Lust. The Pharisees, who were as unholy as any Men upon Earth, were not Whoremongers, Adulterers, nor Drunkards, they abstained from those sordid Vices, and practised many Virtues, which much recommended them to the People; and caused them to esteem them, as Persons of great Sanctity. If they had not maintained

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Regularity in Conduct, our Saviour would never have compared them to *whited Sepulchres*, which are fair and beautiful: As he would not have likened them to Tombs, if they had not been inwardly full of putrid Lusts. They declined fleshly Lusts; but Lusts of the Mind were predominant in them. And this is the *sad* Condition of many, who think themselves, and are accounted by others righteous Persons. Concupiscence is very extensive in its Actings, and while it is restrained from exerting itself in one Way, it acts with great Violence in another. It is surprizing, how ready Lusts of the Mind are to break forth in some, who are not so much inclined to gratify the Lusts of the Flesh. Malice and Revenge often possess the Breasts of Men for a long Season, and with great Impetuosity break forth into injurious Acts against their Objects, whenever a fit Opportunity offers, how long soever it may be, since they conceived Displeasure, in their Minds against them.

Farther, That a Man is either regenerate or unregenerate, is evident from many Considerations. 1. He is either dead in Sin, or alive unto God. There is no Medium between Death and Life. What is Life, but a Principle of Action, taken either in a natural or spiritual Sense? If, therefore, a Person hath such a Principle in him, he is a living Man; but if there is a total Want of such a Principle, or Power in him, he is dead, and is absolutely

absolutely incapable of Action. And, consequently, Men must be either the Subjects of spiritual Life, or not. If they are the Subjects of such a Principle, they are of *the Living in Jerusalem*, as the Prophet's Phrase is: On the contrary, if they have no spiritual Principle in them, they are dead in Trespasses and Sins. To conceit, that a Man may be neither living, nor dead, is a ridiculous Imagination. Again, 2. A Person is either Light or Darknes in a spiritual Sense. He is Darknes, if he hath no Ability of discerning spiritual Things: On the other hand, he is made Light in the Lord, if he hath any Capacity of seeing the Glory of God in the Person of Christ. This respects not the Degree of Light; but the Presence of it, or the absolute and total Want thereof. If a Man is wholly destitute of such Light, he is in Darknes, and is Darknes; but if in any Measure, he hath this heavenly Light, he is not in a State of Darknes. In some, this Light is strong, in others, it is feeble. Some discern spiritual Things in a clear and distinct Manner, others more confusedly, they *see Men as Trees walking*. But in all who have it, it will *shine more and more, unto the perfect Day*. I add, 3. Men are either under the Law, or under Grace. The Unregenerate are under the Law, and there they must abide, whether they will or no, until they derive Grace, Light, and Life from Christ. They like not their Situation indeed, when Conscience is

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awakened. And how should they, for it is a dreadful one? Such who are the Subjects of the Law, and retained under its Power, fain would come under the Rule of what, they through Ignorance imagine is the Grace of the Gospel. The Yoke of the Law galls them grievously, and, therefore, they are desirous to shake it off, or plead for an Abatement in the Strictness of its Precepts, for a Release from its Curse; but it holds them fast, whether they will or not; it is God's just Appointment, that so it shall do. And, consequently, their Attempts to lay hold on evangelical Privileges and Benefits, are no other than Endeavours to rob God of the choicest Jewels, He designs to bestow on his Creatures. They have no present Title to receive Gospel-Promises, and Gospel-Consolations. Let them hear what the Law saith, in its Commands, Prohibitions, and terrible Threatnings, for they are according to Justice its Subjects. Men's Concern, for the Encouragement of Sinners in a State of Unregeneracy, proceeds from Ignorance of the true Nature both of the Law and Gospel, or from a dreadful Corruption of each. Such, who are under Grace, are, indeed, *dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, and that wherein they were beld*, while in Unregeneracy, *i. e.* the Law is become *dead to them*, that is to say, as in the Form of a Covenant, and, therefore, they are not subject to its Comminations: But have a *visible* Claim, according to the Ordination of God, unto Gospel-Promises, Gospel-Privileges,

Privileges, and Gospel-Consolations, and no other than these Persons have any such Claim. Again, 4. A Man is either holy, or unholy. Holiness here intends not Perfection, but a holy gracious Principle, implanted in the Heart, by the Spirit of God, which disposes the Mind unto Acts of holy Obedience to the Law, for such Uses and Ends, as are appointed of God. The Man who is destitute of such a Principle is unregenerate, whatever his Convictions are, or his Sorrows, or his Joys, or his Resolutions, or his Acts thereupon. There is no Medium between Sanctification, and a total Want of it. It is true, that there are Degrees in it; but impossible it is, that any Man can neither be sanctified in Part, nor unsanctified. Such an Apprehension is a mere Dream. And, therefore, there can be no intermediate State between Regeneracy, and Unregeneracy. 5. A Man is either in a State of Meetness for Heaven, or he is not. If a Person may be in a Condition, neither fit, nor wholly unfit for Heaven, the Notion of Purgatory is not so ridiculous, as Protestant Writers have represented it. Why may it not be thought probable, that Men dying in such a Condition, may be detained in some middle State between Heaven and Hell, until such Time, as they shall be prepared for an Entrance into the blissful Mansions? This is the only Doctrine, by which the purifying Flames of Purgatory can be supported. Moreover, 6. The Scripture gives us no other Distinction
of

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of Men, than Believers, and Unbelievers, of Men, who have Faith, and who have not Faith. Unto the former Ministers are charged with a comfortable Message, and unto the latter with a dreadful one: *He that believeth, shall be saved; and he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Some discover great Concern for the Consolation of Persons, whom they judge not to have Faith at present, which is a preposterous Thing, and agrees with neither Law nor Gospel. The Law condemns all as Transgressors, and the Gospel is a Revelation of Pardon, Peace, and Salvation, as claimable only by Believers. Until a Man believes in *Jesus Christ*, he can have no Ground of Comfort and Peace. We must first die to the Law, and despair of obtaining Life, in that Way, before we can rightly receive Comfort from the Gospel. That secret Right the Elect have to Pardon, Justification and Blessedness, in Christ, is not the Foundation on which Faith acts, but the Divine Declaration of God in the Gospel.

These Things, I suppose, are sufficient to prove, that there is no intermediate State between Regeneracy and Unregeneracy. If not, more Arguments offer themselves immediately to Consideration, which would abundantly confirm it. Now, if there is no such intermediate State, then it will follow, that no unregenerate Man can be subject to the Law of God, can discern the Things of the Spirit, or can come to Christ, and believe in him.

The

The carnal Mind and the natural, must mean an unregenerate Person, or one who is not born of God; and what is denied of the Power of any in such a State, is denied of all, who are in that State, whether they be profligate and abandoned Sinners or no.

Some Observations on this Subject.

Observ. 1. Pride in Men, as it is a Sin, so it is extreme Folly. For we have all lost that, which was the true Glory of our Nature, and are become the Subjects of such base and fordid Lusts, as render us most abominable and hateful.

2. Salvation must be unconditional and free; because as the human Mind is thus debased, it is incapable of performing Duty, in order to the Reception of Divine Benefits.

3. It is astonishing Goodness in God favourably to regard Men.

4. He is at full Liberty to bestow the special Blessings of his Grace, on whom he pleases, since none can prevent Divine Goodness, by holy Acts of Obedience.

5. It betrays Self-ignorance in those, who extol human Wisdom and Power.

6. If we imagine, that we have a natural Capacity of doing Good, it is an Evidence, that we are in a State of Unregeneracy. I would now answer some Objections.

Object. 1. If it is once believed by Men, that they are thus impaired in their Ability to do Good, it will prevent them acting the best they can. *Answer.* Wholly to neglect Duty, because

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because we cannot perform it, as we ought, is a most dreadful Way of sinning, and doubtless will add much to the Weight of our Punishment.

Object. 2. Ungodly Men have desired and sought after spiritual Good, and, therefore, the human Mind is capable of being raised up towards heavenly Things. So did *Balaam*, for Instance. *Ans.* In spiritual Blessings, two Things are to be considered. 1. A Freedom from Misery, and the Enjoyment of Ease and Pleasure, which are eligible to Nature, though corrupt. 2. The true Nature of those Blessings, as spiritual, so they are neither discerned, nor desired by a depraved Mind. 3. God's Way of bestowing these Blessings is despised and rejected, as foolish and unfit, by the carnal Mind.

Object. 3. The Proofs which are brought to confirm this Doctrine of the universal Depravation of human Nature, are impertinently alledged, because they are no other than descriptive Characters of the *baser* Part of Mankind, who are abandoned to Vice, and, consequently, those Proofs no way affect, nor can they relate to Men, of Sobriety, Virtue and Religion. *Ans.* This Objection, I confess, requires a particular Consideration; for if it is founded upon Fact and Truth, the whole Scheme of what we account the Gospel of the Grace of God, will necessarily vanish into nothing.

1. There

1. There is no intermediate State between Unregeneracy and Regeneracy: Or, every Man is either unregenerate, or regenerate. These two Classes divide and comprize all Mankind. 2. Regeneration is a Work of God upon Men, which capacitates them for, and disposes them unto a holy and acceptable Obedience. And, therefore, 3. Until this Work is wrought upon a Man, he is not able to *serve God acceptably, with Reverence and godly Fear*. For, 4. Every unregenerate Person is the Subject of impure Habits only. He hath no good and holy Principles in him. Yet, 5. There is a Difference among unregenerate Men, as to the Eruption of Evil in their Conduct. Though all of this Character are unable to do Good, many of them are just, sober, and benevolent in their Behaviour, and do not run into any Excess of Riot. Hence it follows, 6. That we must not conclude, that every unregenerate Person is that in his Conduct, which the Scripture charges upon some who are in this State, *viz.* a Swearer, a deceitful Man, a Murderer, and other the like detestable Characters. 7. Some Things expressed in holy Scripture of an evil Nature, are true of all unregenerate Persons, *viz.* Ignorance of spiritual Things, Aversion to them, Enmity against God, and the like. These must be granted to be true of all who are in a State of Unregeneracy, except it can be proved, that there is an intermediate State between Unregeneracy, and Regeneracy, or that
a Man

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a Man may be neither unregenerate, nor regenerate; but something between both. And, consequently, 8. The Seeds of all Vice are in all Men, though all Vice does not appear in the Conduct of every Man, as was before observed out of *Seneca*. 9. God, who searches the Heart, knows our internal invisible Acts, and, in his Account, we are what we act internally, and Vice, yea, a great many Vices may be acted in the Mind of a Person, who never proceeds so far as to perpetrate vicious Acts outwardly; and therefore such, who are virtuous in Men's Esteem, in God's Account may be exceedingly criminal and vicious. 10. Vice is sensual and intellectual, and either the one, or the other, is predominant in every unregenerate Person. These Things, I think, amount unto a full Answer to this Objection.

It is not founded on Fact, and, therefore, no Force at all attends it. What is said of the Depravity of Mankind, is true of every Man; some particular Actings of Lust relate unto some Persons only, which is no Contradiction to the Doctrine of the Depravation of Men universally. The Truth is this, all Men are corrupt; but the Corruption of our Nature discovers itself, in some Persons, more in one Way, in others, more in another Manner. Some Things spoken in the Scripture of unregenerate Men, respect Concupiscence in their Hearts; those Things are true of all to whom that Character belongs, whatever their Deportment may be. There are other Things

Things expressed of the Eruption of Lust, in this, or the other Manner. Some of those Particulars are true of one unregenerate Man, and others of them are chargeable on some other unregenerate Persons. When we say, that Lust in the Heart is a Disposition to all and every Sin, we do not mean, that it actually breaks forth into external Acts of all Kinds of Evil, in any Man. Perhaps, that is not possible, because some Lusts are so different from others, in some Respects, that they are a Check upon each other, which prevents the Gratification of all Sorts of Lusts, at the same Time, and in the same Acts. For Instance, Prodigality and Covetousness: A Man cannot well be *lavish* and *niggardly* in the same Acts; though he may be both in different Acts, and at different Times. What we affirm, and shall always abide by, as a certain Truth, on this Subject, is this, That every Man naturally hath no Disposition to Holiness, and is inclined unto Evil. But we do not intend, that this Disposition to Evil discovers itself, in all the same Way, and in the same Degree. No, no, we allow, that there is a very great Difference among unregenerate Men, as to the Eruption of that Lust, whereof all Men are the Subjects, both in the Manner and Degree of it. Some are serious, and others are prophane. Some are tender and compassionate, others are cruel and unaffected with the Miseries of the most deplorable Objects. Some are covetous, others are bountiful and generous in Acts.


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Acts of Liberality, for the Relief of the Indigent. Some are Swearers, others tremble at an irreverent Mention of the great Name of their Maker. Some are tricking and fraudulent, others are Men of Honour and Probity. And, therefore, we are far from thinking, that all unregenerate Persons are of dissolute Manners, or that they are all guilty of all those Crimes, which the sacred Writers impute to Men in a State of Unregeneracy. Some of them are guilty of one, and others of them are guilty of others of those Crimes; and so take unregenerate Men together, or in a collected View, and they afford Matter for the whole Charge exhibited by the Divine Writers: And this is what we ought to do.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

*Of the Defects which attended
the Doctrine of Morality, as
taught by Philosophers and
Poets.*

 I Understand by the Doctrine of Morality, Natural Religion, in its Purity, or that Law, under which Man was placed, in his original State. And that Law contained Precepts, Prohibitions, Promises and Threatnings. And, therefore, Obedience entitled Man to the Enjoyment of Happiness; but Disobedience subjected him to penal Evil, or Misery. My Design in this Chapter is to prove, that the *Philosophers* and *Poets* were very defective in their Account of this Doctrine, or, that the Religion of Nature, in its Purity, is not to be learned of them.— That in their Practice they did not come up to their Precepts on this Subject. And shall conclude with some Observations.

First, I would give some Account of *Morality*, as it was taught by *Heathen* Writers.

I. *Philosophy* teaches us the Existence of God. Without a Belief of the Being of God, there can be no Religion at all. This first Principle is so clear a Truth, that Reason can-

not but discern it, when it is exercised upon the Dependence of all Things, which are known to exist. *Cicero* demonstrates, in a very strong Manner, "the Being of God, from the Number, Order, Beauty, and Utility of Things about us *." And he asserts, "That the Sense of Deity is innate; and, as it were, engraven in the Mind †." That none are so wild, and savage, as not to acknowledge that God is ‡." With great Ingenuity and Strength of Reasoning, he proves, that "the Universe must have been formed by a wise Agent, and not by a fortuitous Course of Atoms ||." That, "it was formed to an End; or, that a final Cause had Place in the Mind of its Former §."

By

* *De Natura Deorum, Lib. II.*

† Sed et Deos esse Naturæ opinamur, qualesque sint Ratione cognoscimus. *Tusculan. Quæst. Lib. I. cap. 16.* Omnibus innatum est, & in animo quasi insculptum, esse Deos. *De Natura Deorum, Lib. II. cap. 4.*

‡ Ipsis in hominibus nulla gens est neque tam immanis, neque tam fera, quæ non, etiam si ignoret, qualem habere Deum, tamen habendum sciat. *De Leg. Lib. I. cap. 7.*

— || Hic ego non misere esse quæquam, qui sibi persuadeat, corpora quædam solida, atque individua, Vi & Gravitate, ferri, mundum, effici ornatisimum, & pulcherrimum ex eorum corporum concussione fortuita? Hoc qui existimat fieri potuisse, non intelligo, cur non idem patet, si innumerabiles unius, viginti formæ litterarum vel aureæ, vel quales libet, aliquo conficiantur, posse ex his in tetram excussis Annalibus Ennii, ut deinceps legi possint effici: Quod nescio an ne in uno quidem versu possit tantum valere Fortuna. — Quod si mundum efficere potest Concursum Atomorum, cur Porticum, cur Templum, cur Domum, cur Urbem non poterit? Quæ sunt minus operosa, & multo quidem faciliora. *De Natura Deorum, Lib. II. cap. 37.*

§ Ita fit credibile, Deorum, & hominum causa factum mundum, quæque in eo sint, omnia. *Ibid. cap. 53.*

By these Things I am led to make this Observation, that notwithstanding all which has been said, by the *ingenious Mr. Locke*, in Opposition to the Doctrine of innate Ideas, I think it is a Property essential to Reason to perceive the Truth of some Things, and the Falshood of others: The Fitness of some Things, and the Unfitness of others. Surely, a reasonable Nature cannot be-equally capable of assenting to Truth and Error, in the full Compass of both. If it is, there can be no Ground to argue from the Absurdity of any Principle for the Truth of its contrary. What is an Absurdity, but some Notion, that is contrary to Reason? And, if there are any Principles, which are certainly known to be absurd, then Reason doubtless is a certain and fixed Rule of Judgment relating to Truth and Error in some Branches of both, although the human Mind hath not an actual Perception of either, when it first exists. What some may intend by innate Ideas, I will not pretend to say; but as to myself, I don't remember, that I ever thought, that more could be intended by that Doctrine, than this, that the human Mind is endowed with a Property of seeing, that all Things are not alike true: In short, that one and two really differ, and are not the same, though we are not born with the Idea of either Number in our Minds. And, I think, that no Man will ever prove, that our rational Nature is not endowed with such a Property. When I shall see this done, I will

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never more appeal to the Reason of Mankind on any Subject: For, to what Purpose will it be to make Appeals to a Non-Entity?

II. Philosophy teaches us some of the Perfections of God. As it is an Acquaintance with his Being, it is not ignorant of various of his Attributes.

1. His Unity. *Philosophers*, though they had not sufficient Courage and Fidelity to the Sovereign of the World, plainly to assert and maintain his Oneness, in Opposition to Idolatry, some of them at least, were not without a Perception of the Truth of this fundamental Principle of natural Religion. And they give some Hints concerning it. *Pythagoras*, as *Justin Martyr* observes, makes the Number One to be a Signification of Deity, whereby he intended the Unity of the Divine Nature *. And, *Philo Judæus*, who, as I think, had studied *Platonic Philosophy*, hath the same Observation †.

2. The Eternity of God. As Reason, when it is exercised upon the Works of God, cannot but discern his Independence, so it strongly concludes on the Eternity of his Being. The *Philosopher* observes, that *that which is always moved, is eternal* ‡. God is a Self-mover, and is one continued Act; he, therefore, is eternal.

* In *Parænet.* p. 18. Edit. Paris.

† *Moras μὴ εἶναι εἰκὸς αὐτοῦ πρῶτον.* De special. Leg. p. 805.

‡ *Nam quod semper movetur, æternum.* Cicero *Samnium Scipionis*, cap. 8.

nal. *Plato* argues for the *Eternity of the Soul from its Self-Motion* ||. But this is absurd, for the Soul exists, and is what it is by the Will and Power of another; was it not so, the Soul must be God. Self-Motion in the Soul can only be a Power to act, and the Exertion of that Power, without external Impulse, not Independence, either with respect to its Being, or Activity. These are peculiar to God, who is the first and only Cause of all Things.

3. *Philosophy* teaches us the Spirituality and Simplicity of the Nature of God. It is very unphilosophical to think, that God consists of Parts, and that he is the Subject of Passions. The Nature of God is indivisible, and absolutely free from all proper Affections. *Plato* asserts, that "it is absurd to think, that the Gods have Joy and Sorrow *."

4. It acknowledges the Omnipresence of God. His Being certainly must be without Limits, on whom all Things depend. The universal Presence of God, *Seneca* expresses thus: "What other Thing is Nature than God, and Divine Reason, present to the whole World and its Parts? Wheresoever thou turnest thyself, there thou wilt see him meeting thee. Nothing is without him †."

F 3

5. It

|| *Phædrus*, p. 1221. Edit. Franc.

* Οὐκ οὐκ εἰκὸς γὰρ οὐτὲ χαίρειν θεοῖς, οὐτὲ το σπένναι. Soc. Πάνυ οὐκ οὐκ εἰκὸς. Philebus.

† Quocumque te flexeris, ibi illum videbis occurrentem tibi: Nihil ab illo vacat; Opus suum ipse implet. De Benef. Lib. IV. cap. 8.

5 It confesses the Omniscience of God. The same *Philosopher* hath these Words: "Known to them, (*i. e.* the Gods) is the Series of their Work, the Knowledge of all Things is always open to them, which pass through their Hands: To us it springs out of Secrecy: And Things which we think sudden, to them they come foreseen, and are familiar †."

6. *Philosophy* asserts the great Power of God. *Cicero* observes, that "God intended to shew his singular and most excellent Divine Power, by rendering the Soul immortal *."

7. It discerns his Immutability. (1.) The Unchangeableness of his Nature. It is impossible, that infinite and supreme Goodness can change for the better, neither can it alter for the worse †. (2.) God cannot change in his Purposes and Decrees. No Alteration to any Advantage can occur to Designs, which are formed with the highest Wisdom, nor can Resolutions taken by such Wisdom ever be receded from. And, consequently, the Divine Decrees must be unalterable; nor is it possible, that God should ever repent of any of his Designs. This is what the *Stoics* understood by *Fate*. *Seneca* expresses himself to this Purpose in

† Nota est enim illis operis sui series. Omnium illis rerum per manus suas iturarum Scientia in aperto semper est: Nobis ex abdito subit, & quæ repentina putamus, illis provisa veniunt ac familiaria. *Ibid.* cap. 32.

* Consolatio.

† Ἀδυνατον ἀρᾶ (εἶπω) καὶ Θεῷ εὐέλκων αὐτὸν ἀλλοιοῦσι;
Plato de *Repub.* Lib. II. p. 606.

in many Places. And *Lipsius* interprets some of his *barbarous* Sayings, in this Sense †.

III. *Philosophers* taught the Doctrine of Providence, or the Divine Government of the World; *Seneca* argues for this, “from the Magnitude of the World: The regular Course of the Stars: The Flowing of Rivers, &c ||”. And *Cicero* very largely reasons on the same Principles to confirm this Doctrine §. *Hierocles* observes, that “if there is not a Providence, that Order which is called Fate could not subsist, and that there would be no Punishment, nor Judgment against the Wicked, neither any Reward, or Commendation of good Actions. With him to deny that there is a Providence, and to deny that there is a God, are the same Thing *.” *Plato* discourses well on this Subject, and clearly proves, that “it is becoming God to exercise a Care over the whole World. — That small as well as great Affairs fall under his Notice, Particulars, as well as Generals. — And that his Care of human Affairs, is neither above the Power, nor below the Dignity of God. And he pronounces it a wicked Imagination, to think, that God through Indolence neglects to take care of his Creatures †.”

F 4

Simplicius

† *Phisolog. Stoic. Lib. I. Differ. 12.*

|| *De Providentia, Cap. I. § De Natura Deorum, Lib. II.*

* *Εἰ μὴ γὰρ εἴη Θεοῦ πρόνοια, οὐκ αὖτις τάξις ἐν κόσμῳ, καὶ εἰμαρμένῳ ἂν εἴποι τις· εἰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα εἴη δίκη, κρείστος τῶν κακῶν οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τιμὴ ἀποδοχὴ τῶν ἀγαθῶν, &c. In *Carm. Pythag. p. 126.**

† *De Leg. Lib. X. p. 956.*

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Simplicius copiously treats on this Subject of Providence, and refutes the *Atheistical* Objections, which are raised against it, “ from
“ the flourishing Circumstances of the Vicious,
“ and the afflicted Condition of the Virtuous
“ and Good.” His Reasoning is clear, just and nervous; for, he observes, that “ God cannot
“ neglect human Affairs, because he is ignorant, that it is fit and proper he should attend to them.——That the Greatness of
“ them is not beyond His Power, and that
“ they cannot escape His Observation because
“ of their Smallness, and Meanness.——That
“ since God is possessed of the most exact
“ Knowledge, the greatest Power, and the best
“ Will, and hath produced all Things of Himself, nor is ignorant, that the Things He
“ created are to be took care of, He leaves
“ them not because of their Greatness, nor
“ despises them as Things not worthy of His
“ Notice.” For, says he, “ if they are such,
“ why were they at all created? His Will is not
“ to be accused, as if He neglected them thro’
“ Pleasures and Indolence. Neither does He
“ contemn them as vile, which He esteemed
“ it no Dishonour to create.” Upon the whole he concludes, that “ it cannot any way be; but
“ that God should take care of the Things
“ He made *,” *Hesiod* well expresses “ the
“ Divine Rule over Men of bright and obscure
“ Characters, noble and ignoble. His advancing some, and bringing others low, &c †.”

IV. *Phi-*

* Εἰσι γὰρ τινες οἱ νομιζοντες εἶναι τὰ δαια, &c. Comment. in *Epiet. Enchirid. Cap. 38.*

† Εἶνα καὶ ἡμεῖς. The first ten Lines.

IV. *Philosophers* assert the Immortality of the Soul. *Plato* roundly affirms it: "Every Soul," says he, is immortal." And he proceeds to the Demonstration of it, thus, "That which is always moved, is eternal. But that which gives Motion to any Thing, and that because it is actuated by another, must necessarily have an End of Life, when it hath an End of Motion. That only which moveth itself can never cease to move, because it is never forsaken of itself. This is the Fountain and Principle of Motion to other Things, which are moved." This indeed is true only of God, who is the Father of Spirits. What, therefore, the *Philosopher* offers on the Principle and Origin of Things, plainly proves the Eternity of God; but it is absurd to apply it to any created Spirit. And, whereas, he infers, that "that which is moved of itself cannot be produced," it is most false. For the Self-Motion of finite Spirits, is not a Proof of their Self-Existence. But the *Philosopher* is right in concluding, that "that is immortal, which is moved of itself, and that he hath no need to blush, who shall assert, that this is the Substance and Nature of the Soul †." *Hierocles* reasons much after the same Manner.

Cicero expresses himself, in the strongest Terms, on this Subject. "For that Souls are immortal it seems to me, says he, must not
" be

† Πασα ψυχη αθανάτος, &c. *Phædrus*, p. 1221.

“ be doubted of *. He, who contends, that
 “ Souls die with the Body fights against Rea-
 “ son, supported by no Reason. He who
 “ thinks otherwise, shall not easily find what
 “ to answer to many and most strong Argu-
 “ ments for this Opinion. For thus it may
 “ plainly be known, and judged of by Sense
 “ itself, that there is in Souls the greatest and
 “ almost incredible Celerity, by help of which,
 “ Things which the Body can perform and
 “ attain, not in some Months only, but scarce-
 “ ly Years, those Things Souls are able not
 “ only at once, and in a Point of Time to run
 “ through; but often think over, and most
 “ easily repeat: If that seems strange, why
 “ should it not be thought wonderful, that the
 “ Mind can recollect so many Things, done
 “ many Ages before? Things which are future
 “ by thinking it can foresee, and not only
 “ present Things, but also past and future;
 “ Minds can comprehend, and, as God, place
 “ under their View? Who will doubt, when
 “ he understands these Things, and experiences
 “ the same in himself, that the Soul is divine,
 “ nor mortal, if Things divine are eternal?
 “ Especially since from two Things, which are
 “ the principal in the Soul, the eternal Na-
 “ ture of it may easily be understood and ap-
 “ prehended. These are the Beginning and
 “ Perpetuity of Motion the chief Thing in it.
 “ For whereas it is moved of itself and not of
 “ another,

* Animos enim esse immortales, ne dubitandum mihi quidem
 videtur, &c. Consolatio.

“ another, as other Things are, if it was the
“ Beginning of Motion would be borrowed:
“ The chief is in this Thing: So long as it is
“ in the Body, the Duration of its Motion ap-
“ pears, yea, even it is perceived, and exerts
“ itself in those who sleep. Wherefore, it may
“ by no means be scrupled, that it is divine,
“ and always will be: Reason evinces, that so it
“ is, and the Issue of Things will prove it. For
“ the Soul is a certain Image of God descend-
“ ing and proceeding from God himself. And
“ if God enjoys Immortality, why should He
“ will that, that Part which He took from
“ Himself should be mortal? But by this He
“ intended to shew, that singular, and most ex-
“ cellent Divine Power is in himself, that not
“ only He is immortal, but also, whom He
“ will He makes Partakers of his Nature, and
“ really immortal.” Elsewhere he speaks thus:
“ In the Knowledge of the Soul we cannot
“ doubt, except we are Dunces in Physicks.
“ In Souls there is nothing mixed, nothing
“ concrete, nothing united, nothing double:
“ Since it is so, certainly it can neither be
“ separated, nor divided, nor broken, nor rent
“ asunder, nor die therefore: For Death is as
“ it were the Division, Secretion and Rending
“ of the Parts, which before Death were held
“ together by a certain Junction *.” When I
read these Things, I cannot but admire, that
this *Philosopher* did not conclude as strongly
upon the Immateriality of the Soul, as he does

on

* Tusculan Quest. Lib. I. cap. 29.

on its Immortality. The Reason seems to be, his Understanding was imposed upon by *Aristotle's* Notion of a certain fifth Nature *, which was never understood, either by himself, or any other Man. I hope the Reader will excuse this Remark.

Socrates discoursed largely on the Immortality of the Soul among his Friends, before he drank the fatal Cup. He used various Arguments to prove it, viz. "That Learning is the Recollection of what we knew before." Hence he concludes, that "our Souls existed, before they came into this mortal State. And if they had Existence before their Union with our Bodies, they can and will exist after Death. — That the Soul is not a Thing compounded, and, therefore, not visible, tangible, nor subject to Mutation, as the Body is †."

V. *Philosophy* represents Virtue as exceedingly attractive and beautiful. In *Plato's* Opinion, "the Charms of Wisdom, i. e. Virtue, in general, are such, that if it could be seen, it would excite an ardent Love of itself ‡." *Cicero* concurs with *Plato* in this Thought; says he, "There is nothing more amiable than Virtue: He who shall attain which, of whatsoever Nation he is, he will be esteem-
ed

* Sin autem est quinta quædam natura ab *Aristotele* inducta. *Tusculan. Quæst. Lib. I. cap. 26.*

† *Plato* in *Phædone*, p. 59, 60.

‡ *Phædrus*, p. 1224.

"ed by us || *." *Seneca* speaks much in the Praise of Virtue: In his Account, "nothing comes nearer to God in Likeness. Its Nature is graceful, and it is ambitious of excellency *." It sweetly pleases by its Nature; and Virtue is so grateful, that it is implanted in evil Men to approve better Things †. "He makes it, the only Good of Men †." *Hierocles* rises high in his Encomiums of it: "A Life according to Virtue is really divine," says he ||. And *Plato* sinks not below him in his Praises of Virtue; says he, "Nothing is more like God; than a most just Man §." The Poet "prefers it to Gold **."

VI. *Philosophy* severely censures Vice. It will not by any means allow, that "a vicious Person can be happy, says *Hierocles*, a Life most evil, is the most unpleasant." He so concludes, "because of the Turpitude of Vice ††." *Plato* pronounces "Injustice, and every Vice of the Mind the greatest Evil ††." And
Cicero

|| * Nihil est enim virtute amabilius: Quam qui adeptus erit, ubicunque erit gentium; a nobis diligetur. De Natura Deorum, Lib. I. cap. 44.

* De Benef. Lib. III. cap. 36.

† Ibid. Lib. IV. cap. 17.

† Epist. 76,

|| Επει ουκ ο κατ' αρετην ΒΙΟΣ της θειας ομοιωσεις. In Carm. Pythag. p. 177.

§ Theætetus, p. 129.

** Vilius argentum est auro, virtutibus aurum. Horace Epist. Lib. I. Epist. 1.

†† In Carm. Pythag. p. 181.

†† Gorgias, p. 326.

Cicero attributes "the Misery of Men to the
" Power and Turpitude of Vice ||."

VII. *Philosophers* taught, that there is a future State of Rewards and Punishment. *Plato* sometimes attempts to prove this from the Nature of the Soul. And he also pleads Tradition for it. He mentions "some sacred Words, " to which Credit must be given, that affirm " that the Soul is immortal, and must be " judged *." Which learned Men, with great Probability, suppose are the inspired Writings. *Hierocles* observes, that " the evil " Man is unwilling that the Soul should be " immortal, lest he should suffer Punishment†." *Cicero* often treats on this Subject, and declares himself, " unwilling to be convinced, if it is " a Mistake‡." The *Fables* of the *Poets*, relating to this Point, prove that the Belief of a future State of Existence, either in Happiness, or Misery, generally obtained.

VIII. They discourse of Virtue in its various Parts. *Cicero* divides it into four general Parts, viz. *Prudence*, *Justice*, *Temperance*, and *Fortitude* ||. These are called *Cardinal Virtues*. *Pythagoras* and *Hierocles* on him made *Prudence* to contain all Virtues, as the Genus, or Principle of Virtue. *Aristotle's* Definition of
Virtue

|| De Leg. Lib. I. cap. 19.

* Epist. VII. p. 1283.

† In Carm. Pythag. p. 164.

‡ De Senectute, cap. 23.

|| De Inventione, Lib. II.

Virtue is this, *a Medium between Extremes* *. According to this Definition, no Virtue at all can be properly taught. Cicero, after the Mention of the *cardinal* Virtues, proceeds to give an Account of the particular Virtues, which are included in them.

“ 1. Prudence is the Knowledge of Things
“ good and evil, and of each. Its Parts are,
“ Memory, Understanding, Foresight. The
“ Memory, is that by which the Mind re-
“ collects Things, which have been. That
“ is understood, by which it discerns Things,
“ which are. Foresight is that by which any
“ Thing future is seen, before it is done.

“ 2. Justice is a Habit of the Mind main-
“ tained for common Utility, and is rendering
“ to every one, his Dignity. Its Beginning
“ proceeds from Nature. Again, some Things
“ come into Custom by reason of Utility:
“ Moreover, those Things which arise from
“ Nature, and are approved by Custom, Fear
“ of the Laws and Religion establish. Nature
“ is a *Jus*, which Opinion did not produce;
“ but a certain innate Force implanted, as Re-
“ ligion, Piety, Gratitude, Vindication, Re-
“ verence, Truth. Religion, is that which
“ produces the Service and Honour of some
“ superior Nature, (which they call Divine.)
“ Piety is that by which respectful Honour is
“ given to such, who are allied by Blood, and
“ are Well-wishers to their Country. Grati-
“ tude, wherein there is contained a Remem-
“ brance

* Ethic, ad Nichom. Lib. I. cap. 6.

" brance of the Friendships and good Offices
 " of another, and a Desire of rewarding an-
 " other. Vindication is that whereby Violence,
 " Injury, and indeed every Thing, that will
 " prejudice, is opposed, by defending, or pu-
 " nishing. Reverence is that by which Men
 " excelling in any Dignity, are treated with
 " Respect and Honour. Truth is that un-
 " changing Thing, by which, Things that are,
 " or have before been, or hereafter will be,
 " are expressed. *Jus* by Custom, is what che-
 " rishes, that which is easily deduced from
 " Nature, and Use makes of greater Weight,
 " as Religion: Or it is some one of those
 " Things, which we before mentioned, pro-
 " ceeding from Nature, that we see through
 " Custom made of greater Force, or which
 " Antiquity, by common Approbation, hath
 " brought into a stated Order. Of which Kind
 " are, Bargain, Equity, a legal Order. Bargain
 " is an Agreement between some. Equity,
 " which is equitable towards all. A legal Order
 " is a Constitution, concerning something, by
 " the Determination of some one, or some
 " others. *Jus* by Law, is that which is con-
 " tained in a Prescript, which is exposed to the
 " Populace, that they may observe it.

" 3. Fortitude is a deliberate Susception of
 " Dangers, and bearing of Difficulties. Its
 " Parts are, Greatness of Mind, Courage, Pa-
 " tience, Constancy. Greatness of Mind is
 " the Acting and Administration of Things great
 " and noble, with a certain large and splendid
 " Purpose

“ Purpose of the Mind. Courage is that, by
“ which the Mind, in Things great and ho-
“ nourable, placeth much in itself with a cer-
“ tain Hope of Boldness. Patience is a volun-
“ tary and continued sustaining of Things ar-
“ duous and difficult, for the sake of Dignity
“ and Utility. Perseverance, is a fixed and
“ perpetual Abiding in a Matter, which is well
“ considered.

“ 4. Temperance is a firm and regulated
“ Rule of Reason over Lust, and over other
“ irregular Motions of the Mind. Its Parts
“ are Continency, Clemency, Modesty. Con-
“ tinency, is that by which Lust is ruled, with
“ the Government of Counsel. Clemency, is
“ that, whereby Minds rashly stirred up to the
“ Resentment of some Invektive, are by Mild-
“ ness restrained. Modesty, is a decent Bash-
“ fulness, by which a Man obtains a clear and
“ fixed Authority. And all these Things are to
“ be sought for their own Sake, if nothing of
“ Advantage should be connected with them.”

Let us take a Review of these *Cardinal Vir-
tues*, and consider what *Philosophy* says of them,
and of the particular Virtues contained under
them.

1. Prudence, which, says *Hierocles*, “ is the
“ prime and chieftest of divine Benefits, by the
“ Aid whereof, when it is well fixed in the
“ Mind, we take right Counsels concerning all
“ Things: That we may die courageously, that
“ we may bear the Loss of our Substance quiet-
“ ly and moderately. For Prudence can sustain

" all the Changes of this mortal Life, and of
 " Chance which attends it, wisely and without
 " Fear. It considers the Nature of Things, and
 " it sees that all Things, which spring out of the
 " Earth and Water, are necessarily dissolved into
 " the same again; it neither is greatly moved,
 " nor holds any of those Cases for unknown,
 " unto which we are liable, nor doubts of the
 " Death of that which is mortal. In like man-
 " ner, it is not ignorant of the Nature of Riches,
 " and that they sometimes come and sometimes
 " go, for certain Reasons, which it would be
 " foolish to oppose. For we are not Lords of
 " those Things, which are not in our Power.
 " But neither the Body, nor Riches, are in our
 " Power, nor any of those Things which are se-
 " parate from our reasonable Nature. Nor is it
 " in us to attain the Empire of our Substance,
 " neither to retain it so long as we wish *."

Epicætetus asserts, that " Things which are
 " not in our own Power are neither good nor
 " evil †." And he makes it " the Condition
 " and Note of the Vulgar never to expect from
 " themselves, either Loss, or Gain, and of the
 " Philosopher to look for both from himself ‡."

Plato maintains, that " all the Motions and
 " Tendencies of the Mind, when they are di-
 " rected by Prudence, lead to Happiness; but
 " by Imprudence to the contrary ||." Accord-
 " ing to *Cicero*, " one Branch of this Virtue
 " consists

* In *Carm. Pythag.* p. 85, 86.

† *Enchirid.* cap. 39.

‡ *Ibid.* cap. 71.

|| *Meno*, p. 420.

“ consists in the Search and Discovery of Truth*.” And, in his Opinion, “ its proper Office is to be a Moderator of human Actions.—That it is appointed to be so by the immortal Gods. He plainly resists this so excellent and divine an Office, who is carried away by excessive Grief, (*i. e.* under Affliction) for he not only gives himself up to Fears and Sorrows without any Advantage; but is also void of Counsel and Judgment: For, where is Reason, if he forgets that he is a Man, and contends that to him Death is not a Thing common? It is most foolish to think, that he is not subject to those Things which other Men submit unto with a chearful Mind † ! ” The *Philosopher* means Afflictions, the Loss of Relations, and Friends, and Death. *Seneca* observes, that “ Conve- niencies have nothing of Goodness in them, that, that consists in Virtue only, and therefore the Loss of them should not trouble us, that by one Thing the Mind is consummated, *i. e.* the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which only agrees to Philosophy ‡ . ” I proceed,

2. To shew what the Philosophers say of Justice. *Hierocles* observes, that “ Justice contains in itself other Virtues, as proper Parts; And allows of nothing foreign from Reason || . ” *Plato* says, “ Justice is Knowledge, *i. e.* is of

G 2

“ Good ; ”

* De Offic. Lib. I. cap. 56.

† Consolatio.

‡ Epist. 74, & 88.

|| In Carm. Pythag. p. 82, 83.

" Good ;" and hence he concludes, that " the more wise the Mind is, the more just it is *." Farther, he says, " Justice is holy, and Holiness is just †." Once more, this Philosopher asserts, that " it is unbecoming to neglect Justice for the sake of Riches, Honour, and Power, and for the Delights of Poetry." Cicero makes " Fidelity to be the Foundation of Justice, which is, says he, Constancy in Words and Agreements, and Truth ‡." The same Philosopher observes, that " Justice is an Affection of the Mind rendering to every one his Due ||." And that " Justice is necessary to be exercised among the most Unjust §." Again, that " that it is to be sought after for itself: That without it human Society cannot subsist **." Let us consider this Virtue, in its several Branches, as it is delineated by this great Man.

" (1.) Nature from which it springs as a Principle, by which Cicero intends a Property in the Mind, to approve what is right, says he, Nature easily shews her Force: Since Men judge that to be rightly done by another, which they cannot do themselves † †. Reason is the highest Law, which dictates what is right, and forbids what is wrong ‡ ‡."

(2.) Re-

* Hyppias, p. 260.

† Protagoras, p. 230.

‡ De Offic. Lib. I. cap. 7.

|| De Finibus Bonorum & Malorum, Lib. V. cap. 23. De Offic. Lib. II. cap. 11.

§ Ibid.

** De Offic. Lib. III. cap. 6.

†† De Amicitia, cap. 7.

‡‡ De Legibus, Lib. I. cap. 4.

(2.) Religion, or the Worship of God. This great *Philosopher* observes, that "Piety is Justice towards the Gods *;" and also, that "Religion is contained in the pious Worship of the Gods." *Plato* says, that "Holiness and Piety is the Service of the Gods †." *Hierocles* calls it, the Leader of all Virtues. "The Chief of all Virtues. The Seed of all Virtues. The Parent of Virtues." And he observes, that "the Contempt of it is the Leader of all Vices ‡." In his Account, "he is a pious Man, who is endowed with divine Knowledge." *Seneca* observes, that "to worship the Gods, is to believe that the Gods are. To render to them their Majesty, to ascribe to them their Goodness, without which is no Majesty, to know that they are they, who preside, who govern all Things by their Power, who defend Mankind, and are careful of every one, they neither do nor have Evil. — Wouldest thou have the Gods propitious? Be thou good. Who ever imitates, *i. e.* the Gods, sufficiently worships them ||." Sometimes the *Philosophers* advise us to pray to God, and give us some Directions how to perform that Part of divine Service. Thus *Socrates* observes, that "Nothing should be asked of the immortal Gods, but that they would communicate good Things. Because they know what is use-

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"ful

* *De Natura Deorum*, Lib. I. cap. 41, 42.

† *Euthyphro*, p. 9.

‡ *In Carm. Pythag.* p. 11—68, 117. p. 27.

|| *Epist.* 96.

“ful for any. But we often desire that in
 “our Prayers, which it would have been better
 “not to have prayed for.” Says he, “the Mind
 “of Man is involved in most thick Darkness,
 “through which thou spreadest forth into many
 “wide Errors in thy Prayers. Thou desirest
 “Riches, which to many have been Ruin.
 “Thou covetest Honours, which have destroyed
 “Multitudes. Thou thinkest over Kingdoms
 “with thyself, whose Ends have very often been
 “miserable. Thou contractest splendid Mar-
 “riages; but as they sometimes aggrandize,
 “so sometimes, they entirely ruin a Family.
 “Cease, therefore, O foolish Mind, from the
 “Occasions of future Evils; in order to abound
 “in the most happy Circumstances refer thy
 “whole self to the Pleasure of the Gods. For
 “they who use readily to bestow good Things
 “are able to chuse the most fit *.”

(3.) Piety, which is here taken for a becoming Affection towards our Relations, Friends, and Countrymen. *Hierocles* requires us, “not
 “to spare our Bodies, nor our Substance;
 “but freely to impart of all Things of this
 “Kind for the Support of our Parents.” In
 his Opinion, “it becomes us not to be called
 “off, even by our Necessities, from a Care of
 “our Parents; but to be so much the more
 “delighted with it, by how much more it is
 “full of Labour and Difficulty. Yea, not to
 “be sparing because of the Greatness of the
 “Expence; but to lay out for their Use, all
 “Things

* *Valerius Maximus, Lib. VII. cap. 2. externa,*

“ Things with a ready and chearful Mind.” And he observes, that “ it is becoming to nourish our Parents, and not force them away with Contumelies *.” *Plato* asserts, that “ every one ought to reckon, that all Things, which he possesses, are theirs, who begot, and educated him, that he ought, according to his Power, to minister all Things to them, viz. external Goods, those of the Body, and those which pertain to the Mind ? ” — Besides, he enjoins it upon us, “ to honour our Parents, thro’ our whole Life, in our Language to them, because the most grievous Punishment is due to disrespectful and unbecoming Words to them †.” *Cicero* pronounces it, “ a wicked Thing not to nourish our Parents ‡.”

(4.) Gratitude is included in Justice. *Cicero* speaks much in the Praise of this Virtue ; says he, “ I desire to be affected with all Virtues ; yet there is none, I rather chuse, than that I may seem and really be grateful. For this one Virtue is not only the greatest, but the Parent of all other Virtues. What is Piety, but a grateful Mind to our Parents ? Who are good Citizens ? Who in the Field, who at Home deserve well of the Country ; but such, as remember the Country’s Benefits ? Who are holy, who are religious, but those who pay deserved Thanks to the immortal Gods, with due Honours and a grateful Mind ? What can be the Sweetness of Life, if Friend-

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“ ships

* In *Carm. Pythag.* p. 44, 45, 213.

† *De Legibus*, Lib. IV. p. 832.

‡ *Ad Attic. Epist.*

“ ships are removed? And what Friendship can
 “ subsist among the Ungrateful? Who of us
 “ that was liberally educated, with whom the
 “ Tutors are not, with whom the Masters
 “ are not, with whom the silent Ground
 “ where he was brought up, or taught, is not
 “ visited, with a thankful Remembrance?
 “ Whose Riches are so great, or ever have
 “ been, which are able to subsist without the
 “ good Offices of many Friends? Truly who
 “ can, if Remembrance, *i. e.* of Favours is
 “ gone, and no Gratitude left? Indeed, I think
 “ that nothing is so much the Property of a
 “ Man, as not only to be obliged by a Favour;
 “ but also by the Expression of Benevolence.
 “ But who is so unkind, so cruel, as to act,
 “ that I say not unworthy of a Favour, but to
 “ be out-done by it*.” Elsewhere, says he,
 “ what Nation loves not Friendship, that loves
 “ not Benevolence, that loves not a grateful
 “ Mind, that remembers not a Favour? What
 “ Nation is it that hates not the Proud, which
 “ hates not the Evil, which hates not the Cruel,
 “ which despises not the Ungrateful †?”

3. The third cardinal, or chief Virtue is
 Temperance. *Hierocles* calls it, “ an inexpug-
 “ nable Keeper of the Mind ‡.” *Plato* placeth
 it “ in the Knowledge of ourselves §.” And
 he observes, that “ the temperate Man op-
 “ poses and overcomes all Pleasures, which ex-
 “ cite

* Orat. pro Cn. Plancio.

† De Legibus, Lib. I. cap. 11.

‡ In Carm. Pythag. p. 250.

§ Charmides, p. 470.

“cite to Impudence, or Injury *.” In his Opinion, “it is impossible in a Commonwealth to honour both Riches and Temperance, that it is necessary unto the Esteem of the one, always to neglect the other †.” *Cicero* tells us, that “Temperance is that which dictates what it is in Things, which is to be sought after, or avoided, that we may follow Reason. For, it is not sufficient to determine what is to be done, or not to be done; but we must persist in that which is resolved upon ‡.” In his Account “Modesty and Temperance is the same, and that it is the Government of our Desires, and keeping them obedient to Reason;” says he, “Temperance is the Enemy of Lust: And Lusts are Pursuers of Pleasure §.” The Virtues contained in Temperance, are these:

(1.) Continency. *Cicero* observes, that “this Virtue doth not intemperately lust after any thing, whereof we see many are guilty §.”

(2.) Clemency. The same Philosopher affirms, that “nothing is so popular as Goodness: None of the Virtues with the Multitude, neither is more admired nor more acceptable. For Men in nothing come nearer to God, than in giving Safety to Men.” He will not allow us “to hearken unto those, who

* De Legibus, Lib. I. p. 784.

† De Repub. Lib. VIII. p. 718.

‡ De Finibus Bonorum & Malorum, Lib. I. cap. 14.

§ De Offic. Lib. III. cap. 33.

§ Attici Vita.

“ who think, that we must severely treat our
 “ Enemies, and who account it the Property
 “ of a great and valiant Man. For, there is
 “ nothing more laudable, nothing more wor-
 “ thy of a great and excellent Man than Re-
 “ concileableness, and Clemency *.” *Seneca*
 much extols this Virtue, and defines it to be
 “ Lenity and Mildness in the Infliction of Pu-
 “ nishment for Offences?” He distinguishes it
 “ from Mercy, and asserts, that “ that is a Vice
 “ of the Mind, and ought not to be exercised,
 “ nor ought Pardon to be extended to Crimi-
 “ nals †.” In this I suppose the *Moralist* will
 be thought too severe against Offenders. But
 perhaps his Reasoning will not easily be an-
 swered, notwithstanding the seeming Severity
 of the Conclusion unto which it brought
 him ‡.

(3.) Modesty is another Branch of Tem-
 perance. *Cicero* gives it as his Opinion, that
 “ he takes away the chief Ornament of Friend-
 “ ship, who takes away Modesty from it.”
 And he asserts, that “ without it nothing can
 “ be right, nothing fit. Its Influence is great,
 “ for some are overcome by it, who would
 “ be overcome by no Reason ||.” *Seneca* ob-
 serves, that this Virtue is not always found
 where there is a Shew of it. That “ the
 “ Woman is not modest who repulses, that
 “ she

* De Offic. Lib. I. cap. 25.

† De Clementia, Lib. II. cap. 3.

‡ De Amicitia, cap. 22.

|| De Offic. Lib. cap. 41.

“ she may inflame her Lover *.” Real Modesty is a Guardian to the Honour and Virtue of the fair Sex. When once that is lost, by being detected, they rush into “ an Excess “ of Impudence and Impurities,” as *Juvenal* notes †. For, the Mind grows callous, and hardened, by being detected in the Practice of Vice.

4. The last *Cardinal*, or principal Virtue is Fortitude, whose Parts are these :

(1.) Greatness of Mind. *Cicero* defines it thus : “ What else is Fortitude ; but when entering into Danger, and Suffering, then to be “ free from all Fear ?” where he observes, that “ Temperance is the Moderator of all Com- “ motions,” *i. e.* in the Mind ‡. And he says, that “ they are not to be esteemed magnani- “ mous, who do ; but who defend from In- “ jury ||.” True it is, that he is not a *Hero*, who makes Havock of Mankind, to increase his Riches, and enlarge his Dominions, whatever his Exploits may be ; but he, who *bravely* faces Dangers to defend his Country’s Rights and Liberties. And, therefore, the *Tyrant*, and the *Pirate*, have no Claim to the Character of Magnanimous. For Magnanimity is always directed by Justice. It does Injury to none. The hazardous Enterprizes it undertakes, and prosecutes, are not prejudicial to

* De Benef. Lib. IV. cap. 14.

† ————— Nihil est audacius illis Deprehensis. Iram atque animos a crimine sumunt. Sat. VI.

‡ Tusculan. Quæst. Lib. V. cap. 14.

|| De Offic. Lib. I. cap. 19.

to any ; but calculated to render the Innocent easy and happy.

(2.) Firmness of Mind, or Courage. This Virtue consists in a Freedom from Fear in the greatest Dangers, and from Grief and Sorrow, under the Loss of Relations, Friends, and Substance. *Philosophy* teaches us to maintain this Courage, by this Consideration, that “no-
“ thing can prejudice nor profit a wise Man,
“ because he hath all in himself, that is ne-
“ cessary to his Happiness. External Things,
“ Riches, Honour, Friends, &c. are not his
“ Happiness, and, consequently, the Loss of
“ them, cannot render him miserable. As his
“ Felicity consists in Virtue, if he preserves
“ that, his Happiness remains entire.” So says *Seneca* *.

(3.) Patience. This Virtue is to be exercised under Affliction and Trouble. *Philosophy* also proposes various Considerations to maintain this in the Mind, viz. That “all ex-
“ ternal Things are uncertain. — That Af-
“ fliction is an Occasion of Virtue, and for the
“ Trial of it. — That it is the common Lot
“ of Mankind ;” so speaks *Seneca* †. *Cicero* says, “we may hope for what we desire ; but
“ that which happens, we ought to bear ‡.” And he observes, that “all Things which
“ happen not through our Fault, we ought to
“ bear patiently ||. Again, says he, “ what-
“ ever

* Epist. VIII.

† De Providentia, cap. 4.

‡ Orat. pro Cæcio.

|| Ad Heren. Lib. II.

“ ever occurs, we ought to suffer patiently,
“ and wisely, and remember, that the same
“ hath happened to Men *.” Farther, he adds,
“ if there is no Patience, why do we extol
“ Philosophy † ?”

(4.) The last Part of *Fortitude* is Perseverance. This is continuing to keep up the Courage and Patience of the Mind, in Dangers and Trouble. Unto this also Philosophy lends us her Aid. “ Not to persevere in a
“ steady Practice of Virtue is to fall into Vice.
“ It must be the Part of a wise Man to be
“ constant in the Observance of the Rules of
“ Philosophy. No Contumelies, no Force, no
“ Danger can drive a magnanimous Mind from
“ a Cause it hath undertook to defend. There
“ is nothing so becoming, when Advice and
“ Counsel is taken concerning a Matter, as to
“ persevere constantly in it ‡.”

If we should now farther observe what Considerations Philosophy proposes, in order to render us calm, and easy under those Troubles, which human Nature is subject unto, perhaps, it might not be unacceptable to some, and others may be excited by it, to adore Divine Favour, which hath furnished us with a gracious Revelation, from whence we may derive much more solid and comfortable Truths, for our Support in those distressing Circumstances, which sometimes attend us in this *Vale of Tears*.

And

* Epist. ad Attic. Lib. XII.

† Tusculan. Quæst. Lib. II. cap. 14.

‡ Cicero de Offic. Lib. I. cap. 34.

And I shall do this on three Heads, viz. Poverty, Afflictions, and Death.

I. Poverty. A *penurious* State is attended with many great Inconveniencies and Difficulties, as well as, that through the Folly and Vice of Mankind it exposes its miserable Subjects to Neglect and Contempt. But *Philosophy* can bravely dare to meet and embrace so afflicted a State, and triumph in it. For it teaches us, that “a low State of Life cannot “be prejudicial to the temperate Man; and “that it is profitable to the intemperate *.” That “nothing will satisfy Lust, a little satisfies Nature †.” The *Philosopher* exhorts us “to condemn Poverty;” and observes, that “no “Man is so poor as he was born ‡.” And, that “it is an Evil to none, unless to him “who is reluctant to it ||.” In his Opinion, “he is a great Man who is poor in the Possession of Riches §.” He will not allow, that “a Man is poor, who hath but little; “but he that desires more,” *Seneca* **. The *Poet* thought, that “unhappy Poverty hath “nothing more troublesome in it, than that it “exposes Men to Contempt ††.” But this is not universal; for wise Men despise not a poor Person, if he is virtuous. *Themistocles* being

* *Seneca de Consolat. ad Helv. cap. 9.*

† *Ibid.*

‡ *De Providentia, cap. 6.*

|| *Epist. 123.*

§ *Ibid. Epist. 20.*

** *Epist. 2.*

†† *Nil habet infelix Paupertas durius in se, Quam quod ridiculos homines facit. Juvenal, Sat. III.*

being asked, "If he would match his Daughter with a poor good Man, or to one not approved, but rich? Answered, I had rather have a Man, who wants Money, than Money which wants a Man *." *Simplicius* observes, that "by Poverty, we are often prevented being luxurious, which conduces much to the Preservation of Health †." And that "some perish through their Delights, and because of their Riches are brought into the greatest Dangers; therefore Poverty may prove more advantageous than Riches ‡." What stupid Folly is it in Men insatiably to thirst after Abundance, as the Generality do, since all must allow, that a little suffices Nature?

II. *Philosophy* prepares the Mind for suffering many and great Afflictions, without Perturbation, and excessive Grief, by various Considerations, *viz.* that "it is pleasing to God to see Virtue tried ||. That grievous Things are intended for our Advantage, as Members are cut off for the Health of the Body §. And that those, whom God approves, whom he loves, he calls to endure hard Things, proves and exercises, that they may be the more fixed in Virtue **. Moreover, that the Will of God is to be submitted

* Plutarch in ejus Vita.

† Comment. in Epict. Enchirid. p. 269.

‡ Ibid. p. 245.

|| Seneca de Providentia, cap. 2.

§ Ibid. cap 3.

** Ibid. cap 4.

“mitted unto; that whatever he requires, we
 “ought to yield; that all Things are appointed
 “of him; that Happiness consists not in
 “what we may be deprived of: Whether
 “Children, or Riches, or Health, or Liberty,
 “or Life itself: These are external Things;
 “but Happiness is internal, that, therefore,
 “may be enjoyed when all these Things are
 “taken from us,” so says *Seneca*.^{*} And *Simplicius* says, “Afflictions are rather Ornaments
 “and Benefits, than Evils, to those who pa-
 “tiently endure them †.”

III. Death, which is justly called the King
 of Terrors; *Philosophy* teaches us not only to
 submit unto it patiently, but with Cheerful-
 ness and Triumph over it. This it doth from
 the following Considerations, *viz.* that “it is
 “no Evil; he that accounts it such, cannot
 “but be afraid of it ‡. That it is common
 “to all ||. And that we are continually in
 “Danger of it, by one means or other; and
 “that our Life is but short §.” Besides, *Phi-*
losophy represents Death as desirable. “Be-
 “cause no Solitude will succeed it **. Per-
 “fection of Virtue follows upon it, which in
 “this Life is not attainable ††. Besides, it
 “brings Men to the divine Counsels and Com-
 “pany of happy Minds, and delivers them
 “from

* De Providentia.

† Comment. in Epist. Enchirid. p. 64.

‡ Cicero de Finibus Bonorum & Malorum, Lib. III. cap. 8.

|| Tusculan. Quæst. Lib. I. cap. 5.

§ Ibid. cap. 38.

** Ibid. cap. 46.

†† Ibid. cap. 19.

“ from Trouble and Impurity *.” Moreover, *Philosophy* endeavours to work us up unto a Contempt of Death, by these Considerations, viz. that “ if no Sense should remain after Death, we ought not only to contemn, but desire it †. That the Fear of Death prevents all Comfort in Life, and often causes Men to act a Part, ruinous to their Parents, to their Friends, their Country, and often to themselves ‡. That, that which is of a mortal Nature, cannot be delivered from the Decree of Death, by any Kind of Helps ||,” so says *Hierocles*: And *Simplicius* observes, that “ Death in itself is not evil, or formidable, it is so only in our Opinion §.”

Farther, *Philosophy* asserts, that “ pure Wisdom is not to be attained any where, but in the State of the Dead, and, therefore, it is beside Reason to fear it.” Hence, it concludes, that “ there is sufficient Reason, to suspect, that, that Man is not a Philosopher, who is afraid of Death; but a Lover of his Body, a Lover of Money, and a Lover of Honour,” so says *Plato* **.” And *Cicero* observes, that “ the wisest Man dies with an easy Mind, and the most foolish with the most uneasy ††.”

H

Blessed

* Idem de Senectute, cap. 17.

† Idem Epist. Lib. V. Epist. 21.

‡ Idem de Finibus Bonorum & Malorum, Lib. I. cap. 15.

|| Comment. in Carm. Pythag. p. 159.

§ Comment. in Epict. Enchirid. p. 136.

** In Phædome, p. 51, 52.

†† De Senectute, cap. 17.

Blessed be God for the Christian Revelation, which directs us to Patience under Affliction and Distress, on far nobler Principles than *Philosophy* was acquainted with, viz. that our Afflictions are not Effects of vindictive Displeasure; but Fruits of paternal Love, Goodness, and Care. That the Design of them, is to take away Sin. That they are intended for the Exercise of that noble Principle of Grace, which God of his rich and distinguishing Kindness wrought in our Souls by his Holy Spirit. That his gracious End therein, is, to wean us from all the delectable Things of this World, and to bring us nearer to Himself. These, with other important Views that might be mentioned, far excel the best that *Philosophy* suggests to us, in order to support our Minds in Trouble.

As *Philosophy* recommends Virtue in general, and treats of various of its Branches, so it condemns Vice in general; Notice whereof has been before taken, and I would now observe what it delivers concerning some particular Vices.

1. Covetousness. This is a Vice which *Philosophy* represents as most odious, and severely condemns. *Simplicius* declares, that “it is unjust, that it tends to Oppression, and ought to be avoided*.” *Seneca* says “it is insatiable, and, therefore, the Mind is never satisfied with what is possessed, how large
“ soever

* Comment. in *Epiët. Enchrid.* p. 158.

“foever it is*.” That “it causes Difference
 “among Mankind, and prompts to Rapine†.”
 And “that it renders Men unwearied in La-
 “bour to acquire Riches‡.” *Cicero* observes,
 that “it is a Mind remote from Wisdom||.”
 That “it moves to a filthy Gain§.” That
 “there is no Office so sacred and so-
 “lemn, which it will not neglect and vio-
 “late**.” That “it is blind††.” And that
 “no Vice is more foul than Covetousness‡‡.”
 Moreover, he asserts, that “Avarice is the
 “greatest Plague of the Mind|||.” The Poets
 also lash this Vice. *Theocritus* says, that “he
 “who hath immense Treasure, is possessed
 “with a Desire of getting more§§.” *Phocylides*
 observes, that “Avarice is the Parent of
 “all Evil*†.” *Theognis* represents this Vice
 “as Madness*‡.” *Juvenal* notes, that “the
 “greatest Riches cannot give a covetous Mind
 “content†||.” And that “he who hastens
 “to be rich, hath no Regard to Laws. Is
 “without Fear, or Modesty.” *Perfius* ob-
 serves, that “Avarice prevents Rest*||.” And

H 2

no

* *Epist.* 115.

† *Epist.* 90.

‡ *De Benef. Lib. VII. cap. 10.*

|| *Ad Heren. Lib. III.*

§ *Ibid.*

** *Idem Orat. pro P. Quint.*

†† *Orat. Philip. II.*

‡‡ *Idem De Offic. Lib. II. cap. 22.*

||| *Idem Consolat.*

§§ *Eccl.* 10.

*† *NOΓΘET. ΠΟΦΗΜΑ.*

*‡ *ΓΝΩΜΑΙ.*

†|| *Sat. XIV.*

*|| *Sat. V.*

no Question but many Men's Industry springs from their insatiable Thirst after Money, rather than a Sense of Duty. *Horace* severely lashes this Vice *. And *Terence* condemns it with Indignation, saying, "see what Covetousness doth †."

2. Pride, which is a vain Elation of Mind. *Simplicius* says, that "there is nothing more foreign from Philosophy, and a right Way of living, not esteeming that divine Precept of knowing ourselves, which is the Beginning and End of all Philosophy. For, this vain Elation arises not from a Greatness of Mind; but it is a vain Tumor and beside Nature, extending itself to external Things, separate from Things internal ‡." *Cicero* asserts, that "Pride, Haughtiness and Arrogance are to be avoided; that it is a Sign of Levity, not moderately to bear prosperous and adverse Things ||."

3. The Affectation of Glory. *Simplicius* says, "it is a filthy Disease of the Mind to desire to flourish in Fame on Account of good Actions. By that Affection Good is defiled, nor can Good remain if it is not first sought, and if not for its own sake; but we embrace it, on Account of Fame which attends it §. That those, who for the sake of that do
" not

* Sat. Lib. I. Sat. 1.

† Phor. Act. II. Scen. 2.

‡ Comment. in Carm. Pythag. p. 138.

|| De Offic. Lib. I. cap. 26.

§ Comment. in Epiæt. Enchirid. p. 217.

“ not actually commit Fornication, are never
“ free from impure Thoughts *.”

4. Anger, or an undue Resentment of Injuries. *Simplicius* says, that “ this ought to
“ be suppressed, for it springs from Ambition
“ and Vain-glory †.” *Hierocles* observes, that
“ it provokes to Blasphemy ‡.”

5. Envy, which is grudging another the Enjoyment of Advantages, superior to ours. This Vice *Philosophy* condemns, “ as arising
“ from a Non-attendance to human Good.” *Simplicius* ||. *Phocylides* “ cautions against
“ this Evil: And observes, that the Gods live
“ without Envy, and that the Moon envies
“ not the more glorious Rays of the Sun §.” *Terence* observes, that “ through the Influence
“ of this Vice, Judges sometimes act unjust-
“ ly **. *Cicero* says, that “ it is a Spot and
“ filthy Thing ††.”

6. *Philosophy* censures “ Impurity in Lan-
“ guage and Actions, and requires us to ab-
“ stain from it ‡‡.”

7. It condemns Drunkenness. *Philosophy* allows us to drink Wine moderately; but it pronounces “ it evil to drink to Excess |||, and
“ advises us to the Hatred of it §§.

H 3

8, *Phi-*

* Ibid.

† Ibid. p. 276.

‡ Comment. in Carm. Pythag. p. 75.

|| In Epiët. Enchrid. 131, 132.

§ ΠΟΙΉΜΑ.

** Phor. Act. I. Scen. 5.

†† Orat. pro L. Cornel. Bal.

‡‡ *Simplicius* in Epiët. Enchrid. p. 287.

||| Θεογνις ΓΝΩΜΑΙ.

§§ Ibid.

8. *Philosophy* speaks much against *Luxury*. Indeed it is not so severe in its Precepts on this Subject, as “not to grant us the Use of Food and Clothing, as far as is necessary to Health, and is agreeable to Nature, and it permits of Servants for Service. But recommends plain Diet as most wholesome, and observes, that Food which is rich and highly dressed, is a Kind of Poison, from which hurtful Cholics and Fluxes spring. It allows us a convenient Habitation, but not magnificent. Two Things are superfluous; One is what serves for Pleasure; and the other, that is according to the popular Opinion *.” *Seneca* observes, that “Pomp stirs up the Lusts of Men, and only learns us to be covetous †. That the Luxurious live backwards, and cannot be content to live according to Nature ‡. Again, that Luxury is attended with divers Torments. After Fulness it seeks after Hunger, not that it may satisfy the Appetite, but load the Belly ||.” *Cicero* says, that “Luxury is the Parent of Avarice §. That it necessarily produces Covetousness, from which breaks forth Impudence, and from thence all Sorts of wicked and evil Actions proceed **.” Again, he affirms, that “Luxury is altogether vicious

* Simplicius in *Epict. Enchirid.* p. 269, 170.

† *Epist.* 110.

‡ *Ibid.* 122.

|| *Ibid.* 119.

§ *De Orat. Lib.* II.

** *Orat. pro Sex. Ros.*

“cious and abominable *.” His Rule is this, “to eat that we may live: Not to live that we may eat †.” Which Rule I am of Opinion, he learned from *Socrates* ‡. The *Poet* observes, that “Ruin follows Luxury ||.”

But let *Philosophers* and *Poets* represent this Vice in all its pernicious Consequences, such Madness hath seized Mankind, that in spite of the most striking Reproofs, they will be luxurious in Dress, in Diet, and in a Retinue of Attendants, nor will be persuaded to think any Expence too great, to feed their brutal Lust and Vanity. It may be that some Persons, upon considering, what these *Heathen* Writers have said, on God, relating to his Unity, his Knowledge, Power, and Immutability, &c. And on Virtue in general, as also of its various Branches: On Vice in general, and of its different Parts, will be apt to say, what more is necessary to human Good and Happiness, than the Practice of those excellent Rules, which they have prescribed? Many modern Authors, and some of the ancient Christian Writers, have observed, that the *Philosophers* and *Poets* drew their choicest Notions from the sacred Fountain, as *Justin Martyr* §, *Tertullian* **, and *Clemens Alexandrinus* ††. And there is great Reason to conclude,

H 4

* Orat. in L. Pison.

† Ad Heren. Lib. IV.

‡ Atheneus, Lib. IV. p. 158.

|| Terence Adel. Act. IV. Scen. 7.

§ Parænet. p. 13.

** Apol.

†† Strom. Lib. V. p. 448. Edit. Lugd.

clude, that this is true. For certain it is, that *Plato*, through his Thirst after Improvement in Knowledge, travelled into *Egypt*, where he might have an Opportunity of collecting his noblest Sentiments of Divine Truths, which originally were learned of the *Jews*, who resided there a considerable Time. And that many other *Philosophers* took their best Thoughts from him, is, I think, so clear a Point, that it will not admit of the least Dispute. But I will not take this Advantage; but grant, though it is granting more than can be justly demanded in their Favour, that Reason, without any Aid from Revelation, suggested to them all the Truths, which they delivered, and doubt not to prove, that natural Religion in its Purity is not taught by any of them.

Secondly, I shall now proceed to shew, that those *Heathen* Writers were very defective in their Account of the Doctrine of Morality.

I. Natural Religion requires Love to God, as the Spring of Obedience to his Commands. That is, a holy Reverence of Him on Account of His infinite Perfections; a Desire of Communion with Him; and a Disposition to give Him that Glory which is His Due. Love to any Object, cannot bear with a Diminution of its Glory, nor can be content, that another should rival him in that Honour and Dignity, which he alone hath a Right to claim. Hence it is evident, that the *Philosophers* were destitute of Love to God, because they allowed of religious Honours being paid to *Dæmons* and *Heroes*,

Heroes, which they could not have thought of without Indignation, if they had been real Lovers of Deity. No Affection is more warm than Love, and it can't but resent any Detraction from the real Honour of the Object on which it is fixed. If, therefore, the Philosophers had not been *Lovers of Pleasures, more than Lovers of God*, they could not have con-nived at idolatrous Practices, much less have joined with the Vulgar in their *Pagan Devotions*. *Socrates*, that admired, and as some are pleased to stile him, that *divine Man*, if he had had a true Affection to his Maker, would not with his expiring Breath, have ordered his Friends, "to offer a Cock to *Æsculapius* *."

2. Submission to Divine Authority, Reason discerns, that he who made us hath a Right to govern us. The Will of God therefore, is a Law which we are obliged to observe. Wherein are two Things observable; one is, the Matter of the Law; the other is, the Authority of God requiring those Actions of us, which are the Matter of the Law. With respect to the former, Philosophy, as we have seen, recommends many Branches of it, this is *the Work of the Law written in the Hearts of Men*. But as to the latter, the Authority which we ought to regard in the Practice of virtuous Actions, *Philosophy* is defective. For it does not teach us to practise Virtue, as Matter of Duty, which we owe to our Maker; it indeed recommends the

* Plato in *Phædone*, p. 86.

the Beauty of Virtue, and teaches the Turpitude of Vice, or to speak in the Language of our *modern Heathens* the Fitness of Virtue, and the Unfitness of Vice, in an abstracted View from the Will of God, requiring of us to practise the former, and avoid the latter. Doing which is Obedience to our Reason; but Obedience to God it is not, because the Mind is not influenced by His Authority, in what it Acts. This, therefore, is a false Assertion of *Hierocles*, that "to obey right Reason is the same Thing as to obey God *." A Man may do those Actions which Reason discerns the Fitness of, without Obedience to God, or Regard to his Will in his Actions.

3. The Religion of Nature requires us to have Respect to the Glory of God in all our Actions. It is not sufficient, that what we do is materially good. If our End in doing it is not the Honour of our Maker, we use not our Powers in a Subservience to the great End for which they were given us by God. We deny Him that Submission to His Rule, that Reverence of His Majesty, that Adoration of His Wisdom, that Delight in His Goodness, and that Love of His Rectitude and Holiness, which He most justly demands of us, if we exercise not all our Faculties, if we use not all Advantages to His Glory. His Honour ought ever to be first taken into View, and a Regard to His Glory ought to influence us in the whole Course of our Behaviour, as a determining

* Comment. in Carm. Pythag. p. 170.

termining Principle. Nothing short of this living to Him, by Virtue of whose Almighty Will we exist, and are what we be, in our nature, and all our Powers, and from whose uberant Goodness all our Supplies spring.

vain you will search for the Recommendation of this truly noble, this just, this reasonable Service from the *Philosophers*. They commend Virtue indeed, in itself, as the chiefest Good of Man (which by the way is an impious Opinion;) but as for the Practice of it with a pure and single Eye to the Glory of God, they were absolute Strangers to it. Without which there is no true Religion.

4. It is a Truth of natural Religion, that God cannot be profited by the good Actions of his Creatures. He who is the Fountain of Goodness, the Source of all Blessedness, and Origin of all real Dignity, it is impossible, that any Advantage can accrue to Him from the Submission and Obedience of Creatures. God is infinitely above our Praises. The Goodness of none can extend to Him. A Man can't be profitable to God, as he who is wise is profitable to himself. And, therefore, when we have done all, that is to say, the Whole of our Duty, if that was possible, but it is not; we ought humbly to acknowledge, that we are unprofitable Servants, and done what was our Duty to do. Were not then, the *Philosophers* guilty of intolerable Arrogance, Pride, and Impiety, to compare with God, and in some Sense allow, of an Excellency in themselves

selves above what is found even in God Himself, which they did? Can a Christian think of this without the utmost Degree of Indignation and Abhorrence? But Humility is not among the Number of their Virtues. No, they were a Set of the proudest Men the Earth ever bore, though some of them pretended to be above Vain-Glory, and Ostentation. They nourished Pride, where it least of all ought to have any Place: *viz.* in the Practice of Virtue, since the most holy Creature is unprofitable to his Maker.

5. It is a Principle of natural Religion, that all our Good springs from God. If we are dependent on God, as to our Existence, we can't be independent on him, as to our Well-being and Happiness. But *Philosophers* and *Poets* ascribe our Felicity to ourselves. They deny, that external Things are good, *viz.* Riches, Honours, Pleasures, Ease, Health, Liberty, and Life. These Things not being in our Power, they grant, that they are given us of God, and, therefore, they allow of Thanks being given to Him for them. But, as to Virtue, wherein they place the Happiness of Man, they deny, that, that is of God, He formed Man capable of practising Virtue, but his so doing is of Man himself, and, therefore, they deny, that Thanks are due to our Maker for Virtue, wherein they make human Happiness to consist, so that according to them, God made us, and we make ourselves happy, that we be is owing to him,
but

out that we enjoy what is really and intrinsically Good is from ourselves. *Epicetus* observes, that "it is the Note of the Vulgar ' to expect Loss and Gain from without ; ' but that it is the Condition and State of the ' Philosopher, to look for both from himself." And *Cicero* allows of no Thanks to God for Virtue, *i. e.* human Happiness. No wonder our *Modern Heathens* are such Admirers of these *Philosophers*, since they feed their abominable and cursed Pride, in the Manner they do.

6. It certainly is a Truth of natural Religion, that God is our highest Good. That He who is infinitely good, glorious and powerful, is the greatest Good, is most evident. In His Favour we are, we must be happy : In His Displeasure, and in a State of Alienation and Distance from Him, we must be miserable. The *Philosophers*, therefore, were blind to true Happiness, and the *summum Bonum* of the Intelligent Creature, who placed it in Virtue. But as they liked not to retain God in their Knowledge, they placed Happiness in a Thing short of Him, the only Origin of real Felicity.

7. Natural Religion requires perfect Obedience to the Will of God, in order to the Enjoyment of Good, or Happiness. A perfect Creature can't but be the Object of the Approbation of God, and entitled to his Favour and Protection, so long, therefore, as he remains perfect, he cannot be unhappy. But if once the Creature fails of his Duty to God,
he

he forfeits all Claim to His favourable Regard, and becomes obnoxious to His righteous Vengeance. Of this the *Philosophers* seem to be wholly ignorant, and constantly express themselves, in such a Manner, as leads one to conclude, that they thought God does not require of Man perfect Virtue in order to the Enjoyment of Good. This is another Reason why our *Modern Heathens* are so extremely fond of them and their Writings.

Natural Religion is like unto a beautiful and pure Virgin, wholly free from all Defect and Impurity; but, as it is represented, by these Men, it is no better than a patched and painted *Strumpet*, who is deservedly exposed to Shame and Contempt. If the Creature acts in all Things, according to the Will of the great Creator, it hath a Right to the Enjoyment of Good; but a Failure of Obedience to his Commands, forfeits a Claim to his Favour and Protection, and brings the Creature, under his awful Condemnation. That, Reason strongly suggests, that a Performance of Duty entitles to a Reward, is what I suppose all will allow is true. For, Innocence can never fall under the Displeasure of infinite Goodness. And it is equally certain, that Sin, or vicious Inclinations and Acts, render the Subject of such Inclinations, and such Acts, the Object of the Resentment of infinite Rectitude and Holiness. To deny this, is to cast the greatest Reproach on the Religion of Nature, that Men are capable of. It is as agreeable to Reason,

Doctrine of Morality, &c. III

Reason, to think, that a Creature who hath not offended his Maker, in any Thing, may be punished by Him, as it is to imagine, that a guilty Creature may be accepted with Him, and rewarded by Him for his Services. The former, is a foul Imputation, on Divine Equity and Goodness; the latter is an Impeachment of Divine Purity, and Righteousness. That Religion hath not God for its Author, which doth not indispensably require unblemished Purity, in order to the Enjoyment of Happiness. Defects and Interruptions in our Obedience, deprive us of all Title to the promised Reward, and bring us under Condemnation: *Curst is every one, that continueth not in all Things, that are written in the Book of the Law to do them* *. Natural Religion is a System of perfect Morals: But Men, because they have a Consciousness of Guilt, Weakness, and of Disorder in the Temper and Disposition of their Minds, they take the Liberty to represent the Religion of Nature, as destitute of its native Beauty, and under false Colourings of their own. Which springs from Ignorance, Pride, Enmity against God, and Self-love, or Tenderneſs for themselves. For true it is, the right Stating of natural Religion, proves us all to be guilty before God, and involves us in endless Ruin, and that irrecoverably, as to ourselves. Hence it is, that Men, who are unwilling to acknowledge the Equity of the Infliction of Penalty for Blemishes

* Gal. III. 10.

mishes and Defects in their Behaviour, have always contradicted the Principles of natural Religion, as well as corrupted the Truths of the Christian Religion, and this is a Service, where-into these celebrated *Philosophers* and witty *Poets* would certainly have enter'd.

8. These Authors were wholly ignorant of the Necessity of other Principles being produced in Men, in order to the Performance of Duty, in an acceptable manner, than those, which are natural. As human Nature is depraved, and the Heart of Man is an impure Fountain, no Actions springing from it can be approved of God, though they are materially good. Actions in themselves good, are defiled, by the corrupt Principles from which they proceed, and by the *illegal* Views with which they are performed. But, of the Necessity of the Sanctification of our Hearts, these *Philosophers* were entirely ignorant. And, therefore, nothing of the Nature of *true* Holiness can ever be learned of them. It is only Ignorance of the Nature of real Holiness, which causes Men to think, that a Mind under the Influence of vicious Habits can perform holy Acts. And yet, alas! how many entertain such an Imagination, to the Subversion of the Religion of *Jesus*, and the Reproach of the Religion of Nature. The latter requires Purity of Heart, as the Spring of acceptable Obedience, and the former informs us how that is produced.

It

Doctrine of Morality, &c. 113

It is a vain Imagination, to conceit, that the Doctrine of pure Morality in any Branch of it can be learned of these Men. It has been greatly prejudicial to the Interest of *true Holiness*, that their Writings on this Subject have been so much recommended and extolled. I grant, that what they offer may be of Service, in treating on various Parts of Duty, when we are well instructed by Revelation, in the Nature of *true Holiness*; but without that, their Writings will be of no Advantage to any one, relating to that Purity and Holiness, which natural Religion requires of all. And *Tutors* to such, who are intended for the solemn Work of the Christian Ministry, in reading moral Lectures, ought to inculcate on their *Pupils*, the Necessity of applying to Divine Revelation, for right Notions of Morality, and labour to prove, that a just Apprehension of the Nature of *true Holiness*, is only to be derived from that sacred Fountain. I greatly fear, that the Want of this is one Cause of that Corruption, which so much spreads, both in the Principles of natural and revealed Religion, at this Time. If Men are of Opinion, that the Writings of the *Heathens* are sufficient to inform us, what that Purity is, which is required to the Enjoyment of Happiness, it is no Wonder, that the Christian Revelation *sinks* in their Esteem. Nor is this all, for these *Philosophers* say so much in Praise of human Wisdom and Power; that, if Credit is given

to them, we must be obliged to renounce Christianity.

9. *Philosophers* and *Poets* did not teach every Branch of Virtue. *Seneca* "represents Prayer "as needless *." *Cicero* is "an Advocate for "Fornication, and thinks it cruel not to allow "of it in young Men †." And the *Poets* countenance amorous Intrigues, Rapes and Adulteries, by the many impure Stories, which they relate of their abominable Deities. Hence *Seneca* somewhere complains, that "Shame of "sinning is taken away by the *Poets* Fables "concerning the Gods." And *Terence* makes "the Practice of his Deity an Example for "committing a Rape ‡." *Cicero* enters his Complaint against the *Poets* ||. And *Plato*, he would allow of none in his *Republick*. Farther, *Philosophers* and *Poets* agree in countenancing Idolatry, and of performing religious Worship, according to the Custom of the Country. Which some learned Men, to their Shame be it spoken, have endeavoured to excuse §. Moreover, they advanced absurd Principles. *Plato*, as is before observed, maintains the Eternity of Souls, that they always were, as well as that they ever will be. A most irrational Opinion; for nothing that is dependent, can have always existed. The Supposition of an eternal dependent Being, is an Absurdity

* *Epiſt.* 41.

† *Orat. pro Caelio.*

‡ *Eun. Act. III. Scen. 5.*

|| *De Natura Deorum, cap. 38.*

• § *Wolf. Annot. in Epiſt. Enchirid. cap. 38.*

dity of the most evident Kind. *Cicero* somewhere says, that "there is nothing so absurd, "but it is asserted by some of the Philosophers." What need of Caution is there, therefore, in reading the Writings of these Men?

Thirdly, They did not practise what they taught. They were not the same Men out of the *Chair*, as they were in it. *Lucian*, after the Mention of their absurd and contradictory Opinions, in natural Things, give us this Account of their Morals: "Upon diligently "observing their Behaviour, says he, I found "that very inconsistent with their Words and "Precepts. For, those, who thought, that "Money was to be despised, I saw most "greedily thirsted after Gain, contending about "Usury, teaching for a Reward, and tolerating any Thing for the sake of Money. "Those, who in Words contemned Glory, "directed all the Course of their Life unto "the obtaining of Fame. Again, almost all "of them inveighed openly against Pleasure; "but secretly they gave themselves up unto "that only *." But we have a higher Authority to prove, that these Men were *notoriously* guilty of Vice, notwithstanding they so much recommended Virtue, *viz.* that of God himself, they are the Men designed by the Apostle in *Romans*, Chap. i. and in *1 Cor.* i.

These and some other Things are the true Reason, why many are so enamoured with the Writings of these Men. However, natural Religion in its Purity, cannot be learned of them. And I suppose, that a pure and undefiled Religion is not agreeable to the Taste of the virtuous Men of our Age. But it is nothing strange, if vicious Minds are content with a corrupt Religion.

We have seen the *Philosophers*, in their own Opinion, soar to Heaven, and take their Seats among the Blessed, as a Fruit of their Pursuit of Wisdom, and the Practice of Virtue in this mortal State. But it is all a *Dream*, a mere *Chimera*. I doubt not to prove, that these Lovers of Wisdom, and Admirers of Virtue, were under the Dominion of Lust, and that they had no Meekness for the Enjoyment of Felicity, in a separate State. That they are the very Men, whom the Apostle designs, in *Romans*, Chap. i. and in *1 Cor.* i. appears from several Things.

1. From what he observes, they asserted of themselves, *viz.* that *they were wise*, i. e. such who attended to the Dictates of *right Reason*, who laboured much to cultivate it, and boasted of living according to the Dictates of it.

2. It is evident, that he means them, because he mentions God's Manifestation of his Attributes, by the Works of Creation, which they studied, and argued for the Existence of God from.

3. Another

3. Another Reason is, their Ingratitude. They thought no Thanks were due to God for Virtue, which they esteemed the chief Good of Man. They, therefore, were *unthankful*. And such Haughtiness, Pride and Ambition, they cherished in themselves, as it is shocking to think of.

4. These *Philosophers* were guilty of Idolatry: Or they *worshipped and served the Creature, beside (παρά) the Creator*. Dæmons and Heroes, in their Opinion, had a Right to religious Honours.

5. They knew *the Judgment of God*, i. e. his just Resentment against Vice. That, as Virtue is the Object of his Approbation, so Vice is the Object of his Detestation.

6. They were guilty of those Vices, which the inspired Writer imputes to the Persons of whom he speaks. They were *unthankful, unholy, unclean, proud, covetous, Boasters, &c.* Not that all these black Characters met in any one of them; but take them altogether, and the Charge is just. One Vice was predominant in one, and another Vice in another, &c. And this is the true Intention of the Divine Writer.

6. They *sought after Wisdom*. It is, I think, very evident, that the Learned among the *Greeks* are intended, to whom the Gospel was *Foolishness*. They so esteemed Divine Revelation, for various Reasons, *viz.* because it represents the worshipping of any Being besides God, as an impious Practice. Again, it

requires Men to deny their own Wisdom, or to become Fools, that they may be made Wise. Farther, it teaches, that Men are unable of themselves, to practise any Duty, in a Manner acceptable and pleasing unto God. Moreover, that the Happiness of Men is not in their own Power. Than which, nothing is more contrary to the Sentiments of these *Philosophers*, as we have in some measure seen. And a great deal more, might have been produced concerning their Opinion of the Ability of Mankind to acquire Felicity. I add, the Christian Revelation was highly displeasing to them, because it asserts, that the Salvation of Sinners, is brought about by the Obedience and Sufferings of an innocent one, instead of the guilty; which is a Way of saving Sinners, that Reason could never have thought of, nor will embrace, and acquiesce in it, until it is subdued to submit to the Sovereignty of God. Once more, I observe, as a natural Consequence of the last Thing mentioned, that Revelation acquaints us, that the Happiness of Men wholly springs from a free and sovereign Act of the Divine Will. These Principles seem'd absurd to the *learned* and *most cultivated* among the *Heathens*, when the Gospel was first preached amongst them; and they are so accounted by our *Modern Heathens*, who basely corrupt natural Religion, in order to defend themselves, in their Opposition to the Christian Religion. This I know is a Truth, that no Man can be an
 Enemy

Enemy to the Christian Religion, who expects Happiness; but he who corrupts the Religion of Nature: Maintain that in its Purity, and you destroy effectually the Hopes of a Sinner of obtaining Felicity by his own Works.

Fourthly, I shall conclude this *Chapter* with some Observations.

Observ. 1. The *Philosophers*, who made large Pretensions to *right Reason*, were destitute of it. For, *right Reason* is so far from supposing, that Happiness is attainable, by a depraved and guilty Creature, that it strongly concludes upon its inevitable Misery. *Right Reason* is natural Religion *in its Perfection*; and I am satisfied, that nothing can be collected from thence, in Favour of Transgressors, or which affords the least Ground of Hope of the Happiness of a Sinner. No created Understanding could ever have devised, how sinful Men might be saved, in a Way honourable to God; and it is a great Affront to *right Reason*, to imagine, that, that would ever entertain a Thought of a Criminal becoming happy, in a Method, wherein Provision is not made for securing the Glory of all the Perfections of God.

2. No Man's Practice of Virtue has been of equal Extent with his Knowledge. All have wherewith to accuse themselves, both as to Defects in Duty, and the Commission of Evil. And, therefore, none will have it in

their Power to charge the Almighty with Injustice, in their Condemnation, and Misery.

3. How thankful ought we to be for the glorious Light of Revelation, which is above all Compare with the *Glow-Worm* of imperfect Reason! Let us regard religiously the Advice given to us in Relation to the Holy Scripture, *i. e. take heed unto it, as to a Light, that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in our Hearts.* In the Glass of the Christian Revelation, we have presented to our View, Truths more *sublime*, more *noble*, and far more *glorious*, than our Reason could ever have thought of, nay, than Reason, in a State of Perfection, could have discovered.

4. It is incumbent on us to adore Divine Sovereignty, which hides evangelical Mysteries from the *Wise* and *Prudent*, and reveals them unto *Babes*. This is an Act of God's good Pleasure.

5. It is necessary well to distinguish between Natural and the Christian Religion. They are distinct, and greatly differ in various Respects, nor is the latter a *Reinforcement* of the former. It fully provides for the Honour of Natural Religion, in the Salvation of Sinners; but it is not built thereon. He who thinks it is, hath not a true Understanding of either. Natural Religion is the Law, which ensures Happiness to Innocents, but it denounces Wrath and Vengeance against Offenders. And, therefore, to imagine, that a Man hath it in his Power to acquire a Title to

to future Blessedness, is *diametrically* opposite to the Religion of Nature, as well as, that it is *contrary* to the Religion of *Jesus*.

6. *Philosophers* were entirely Strangers unto Holiness, and under the Influence of the most abominable Pride, even in that, wherein, their chief Excellency consisted, *viz.* in the Recommendation and Practice of Virtue. This Charge is fully supported, by their Assertions concerning Virtue, as the *summum Bonum*, or chief Good of Man: For therein is contained a Rejection of God, as the Origin of Blessedness, and the Independency of the Happiness of Man on his Creator is plainly supposed. They maintain, that Virtue is of Man himself, and that, that is the chief Good of Man, and, consequently, Man must be the Author of his Felicity, and not God. Besides, they attributed an Excellency to Man, above what is in Deity, *viz.* voluntary Goodness, or that God is good by Necessity of Nature, but Man is so by voluntary Choice. Those, therefore, who think, that these Men were holy, must certainly be ignorant what Holiness is. A dreadful Truth it is, that none are more unacquainted with the Nature of *true* Holiness, than some, who make the greatest Pretensions to it. The Notion of it is almost lost, as well as the Thing itself is wanting.

Object. It may be, some will say these *Philosophers* did not hear the Gospel, and therefore, it is unfair to conclude, that they would have opposed it, either in the Purity of its
Morals,

Morals, or in the Sublimity of its Doctrines. Who knows but that Men of such extraordinary Talents, and such Assiduity in Study, and who were so desirous of Happiness, might have gladly submitted their Reason to the Guidance of Revelation, if they had been favoured with it?

Answer. 1. It is not to be doubted, that God could have subdued their Pride, and brought them to submit themselves to his Instruction. Such a Change was effected by Divine Grace in the Souls of some, who like them, were vainly puffed up by their fleshly Minds. Tho' not many wise Men after the Flesh were called, some of that Character were. But,

2. Evident it is, that they were not the Subjects of a fit Disposition for embracing the Christian Revelation, if that had been afforded to them. None but such, who are ignorant of their *riveted* Sentiments, and of evangelical Truths can imagine, that they were. For,

3. There is no Agreement between their Opinions and the Doctrines of Revelation, concerning Man, as to his Wisdom and Ability, nor concerning his Happiness and the Way of attaining the Possession of eternal Good.

4. The Admirers of these Men are generally Enemies to *real* Christianity. And it is a certain Fact, that we cannot embrace their Sentiments on many Subjects, unless we renounce the Christian Religion, and corrupt natural Religion also. The Truth of this appears

pears from the Reasoning of many against the Principles of Christianity : they object to those Principles, just as these *Philosophers* themselves would do, if they were present. I could give various Instances, wherein the modern Objectors to evangelical Truths, speak the very Language of these *Heathen* Writers, in their Opposition to those important and interesting Truths. Though it may be some of them do not chuse it should be known, out of whose Quiver they take their Darts, which they point against the Religion of *Jesus*. And, therefore, *Philosophy*, even in its best Part, is no Preparative for Christianity. I can't help declaring, that I am ashamed of the Fondness of some Christian Writers, for the moral Sayings of the *Heathens*, and making them parallel with the Precepts of the Word of God. Possibly some have so done from Vanity, and the Affectation of Fame for Learning, and some for worse Ends; however, it hath had no good Effect, relating to the Cause of Christianity, and the Interest of real Holiness, which can never be promoted, but by a religious Regard to the Scriptures of Truth.


5. Until the human Mind understands and approves of the Religion of Nature, in its Purity, it will not embrace the Doctrine of Christianity. And that Religion is the Law, wherein perfect and uninterrupted Obedience is required of the Creature to all its Precepts, such Obedience, and only such Obedience
gives

gives Right to a Reward, the Want of such Obedience brings the Creature under an Obnoxiousness to Misery. So long as Men discern not the Truth of these Things, and are unacquainted with the Equity of this Constitution, they have not a fit Disposition for embracing the Christian Religion. The Reason is evident, which is this, without a full Conviction of the Righteousness of the Divine Appointment, that only perfect Obedience shall entitle to Life, and that the Want of such Obedience shall subject the Creature to Death and Misery; Men will flatter themselves, that Happiness is attainable, by a wise and proper Exercise of those Powers, with which they are possessed. And this Imagination will effectually prevent them from placing their Hopes of Pardon and Acceptation with God, *alone* in the Merit of the atoning Sacrifice and Obedience of Christ, which, and no other, is the Doctrine of the Christian Religion; and, consequently, these Philosophers who are by many so much admired, if the Gospel had been preached to them, would have united all their Force against it, as a System of Principles, absurd and contradictory to *right* Reason. Not that the Gospel, in itself, is in the least Degree repugnant to *right* Reason: For, *right* Reason discerns the whole Compass of Truth that is necessary to be known, in order to the Happiness of the Creature, the Whole of its Duty, and certainly approves of it. *Right* Reason is never mistaken, it forms no false Ideas
of

of Things, nor draws any false Conclusions, from Principles upon which it exercises itself. It seems to me an Absurdity, to think, that right Reason is ever wrong. If Reason errs, it is not right. Imperfect Reason is right in some Things only; but it is the Privilege of perfect, or right Reason to be right, or to form a Judgment according to Truth, in every Thing, it is designed to an Acquaintance with, by God the Author of it. For right Reason, as has been observed, is no other than the Religion of Nature, in its Perfection, between which, and the Gospel, there is no Inconsistency at all. The Fact is this, natural Religion slays the Transgressor, and leaves him in Death and Misery, without any Hope of Recovery and Salvation: The Gospel, or the Religion of *Jesus*, provides for his Redemption, but it is quite on another Foundation, than that of his Obedience to the Law, *viz.* the sovereign Grace and Mercy of God, extending itself to the Sinner, through the Mediation of the blessed *Jesus*, the Author of the evangelical Institution. Let Men boast as they please of their Reason, no Man since the Fall of *Adam*, has been the subject of *right* Reason. Men are rational, and eternally will be so; but it don't follow from thence, that any Man is the Subject of *right* Reason, that is the Privilege of a perfect Creature only. The Scripture is a Representation of right Reason, and teaches us that, that concludes on the Misery of Sinners, that is the Law, it also is a farther Discovery, *viz.* of the Design of their Salvation and Happiness by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, that is the Gospel.

C H A P. IV.

*Of Regeneration, Conversion,
and Sanctification.*

 Egeneration precedes, and may be considered, as the Foundation and Spring of Conversion and Sanctification. For that is the Principle from which both arise. Grace as a Principle of spiritual Acts is first communicated, and from that proceed all Acts of a holy spiritual Nature, both internal and external. Neither of the latter can be, until the first is wrought. And when that is effected, both the latter certainly follow. In the first, we are merely passive, in Conversion and Sanctification we are active. For,

Conversion is the primary Actings of the Grace of Regeneration, in turning from Sin, Self and Satan unto God through Christ. And,

Sanctification is the Progress of that Work, and includes in it all the secondary Actings of Grace, in Opposition to Sin, and in a Course of holy Obedience, unto God, Having observed the Difference between these, I would proceed to shew;

First, The Necessity of this Work in order to our final Happiness. And this will appear by the Consideration of two Things in general.

1. With-

1. Without it no Man is *meet to be Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.*

2. Election is the Choice of Persons to Holiness in this State, in order to the Enjoyment of Happiness in the next.

1. No unregenerate Person is meet for, nor capable of enjoying the heavenly State.

(1.) He is not the Subject of a Disposition suited to view the infinitely glorious Objects, with the least Degree of Delight, which the blessed always behold and adore, *viz.* God, Christ in his Glory as Mediator, and the Holy Spirit. Enmity, which the carnal Mind is against God, will eternally turn from Him, and chuse other, yea any other Objects, rather than Him to view. His infinite Excellencies, will never affect with Pleasure, the depraved Mind, nor engage it, for a single Moment to reverence, praise and adore Him.

(2.) Nor is an unregenerate Person capable of that holy Fellowship, which subsists in the heavenly World, between God and the Saints. This Communion, on the Part of God, is His discovering to them His infinite Perfections, as they have been exercised in the Contrivance of the stupendous Design of their eternal Salvation, and in its Accomplishment through the Mediation of the blessed *Jesus*. On their Part it is a clear, steady and uninterrupted Prospect thereof, with ineffable Pleasure, and the most profound Reverence. The Glory of Heaven consists much in a Contemplation of the eternal Grace, Mercy, Wisdom,

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Wisdom, Holiness, &c. of God, as displayed in our Recovery. And, consequently, Minds prejudiced against these sublime Mysteries, as all our Minds naturally are, will never have any Relish for them, nor Satisfaction in them. Such who are indisposed to gracious Communion with God now, will never desire Fellowship with Him hereafter. Such a cursed Aversion is there in our Hearts to God, that we could be always content without a Sense of His Favour, provided we might but, for the same endless Duration, be free from a painful Sensation of His terrible Displeasure. 'Tis not Heaven those Men love and desire, but Hell which they dread, that influences them to reform their Conduct, who are Enemies to the Gospel of *Christ*. The spiritual, the pure Joys of the blessed World, they would never envy the Saints the Fruition of, were not they to suffer infernal Torments. The Annihilation of Heaven would give them no Pain, the Ceasing of Hell would afford them the highest Degree of Pleasure, they at any Time wish for. It is no better than Infatuation, to think, that Men whose Minds are wholly taken up with Trifles, and carnal Pleasures, who have no Inclination to present Communion with God, have any Desire to the nearer Fellowship with Him in Heaven. And, therefore, this new Birth is absolutely necessary. Grace must be given, or else Glory will never be desired and enjoyed. And this is true of every Man.

(3.) Unre-

(3.) Unregenerate Persons are disinclined to that spiritual, pure and holy Service, which is the constant Employ of the Inhabitants of Heaven. The departed Saints are not entered into a State of Slumber and Inactivity; but of the noblest Action and Service, *viz.* of praising God, and punctually performing his Will, without any Interruption, or Defects. As they have always a ravishing Sense of his Goodness to them, so they exercise their perfectly pure Minds in Ascriptions of Praise and Glory to Him, for delivering them from deserved Ruin, and placing them in the blissful Mansions, where they find themselves possessed of Ease, Delight, Complacency and Glory, wholly unmerited. Now, Minds who are unacquainted with the Excellency, vast Moment, and transcendent Glory of the Way of Salvation, by the Blood, Righteousness, and Grace of *Christ*, can never unite with the Blessed in Acts of Adoration and Praise on that Account. For without a Perception of the Propriety, and Fitness of this Method of saving Sinners, the Mind can never be suitably affected with, nor give to God the Glory due unto His Name, for this infinitely wise and gracious Contrivance. And without Light subjective, the Glory of Heaven objectively considered will not be discerned; and, therefore, those only, who are now made Light in the Lord, will hereafter be capable of beholding the celestial Light of Glory in the World above. If we do not now

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admire, and bless God for the Provisions His rich Grace and Mercy have made, for our Pardon, Peace, the Acceptance of our Persons, and the Sanctification of our Souls, by the Sacrifice, Obedience, and Grace of His only Son, and our alone, and complete Saviour; let us never think of an Entrance into that World, all whose happy Inhabitants, are constantly employed, in Songs of Praise to God and the Blessed Redeemer, for all saving Benefits which flow from His atoning Death, and to God a well-pleasing Sacrifice; for if we do, we shall find ourselves dreadfully deceived.

2. Election to everlasting Life is the Choice of Persons to Holiness here, as the Means leading on to the Fruition of it. As future Blessedness is the Result of the eternal gracious Decree of Predestination, the Enjoyment of that, it must be concluded, was impossible to any without this Purpose of Divine Grace; and since this Decree appoints the Participation of Holiness here, in order to the Possession of Felicity hereafter, it is a vain Thing to admit the least Hope of Happiness in Eternity, unless we partake of Holiness in Time. If God receives one unsanctified Sinner to Glory, He must act contrary to His own Purpose, and change a Resolution He has formed, which is agreeable to His own infinitely pure Nature, and that would be a Denial of Himself, which to Him is impossible. Add, to this, all those whom God intends to render

render perfectly happy in the next World; He designs to make, in Part, happy in this World; and as Holiness is essential to the Happiness of an intelligent Creature, it is most certain, that the Participation of a Happiness that is inchoate, must consist in partaking of Holiness in some Degree, at least, as complete Happiness supposes a Perfection in Holiness.

Hence observe, that it is mere Calumny to asperse the Doctrine of Predestination, as *licentious* and *unfriendly* in its Aspect to Holiness, nothing is more false in Fact, nor any Thing more contrary to the Truth and Nature of Things can be devised, than that is, with what Confidence soever, some are pleased to affirm it. That Doctrine which supposes the Necessity of Holiness, and such a Necessity as is indispensable, in order to Happiness, it is irrational to conceit, that it is calculated to encourage Sin in any. Farther, none can have an Evidence of their Election, who are destitute of Holiness. This secret Decree of God about Men, opens itself to their View, only by a Communication of Grace and true Holiness. Again, such as are Subjects of Holiness, certainly are Objects of Predestination unto everlasting Life, and shall assuredly enjoy it.

Secondly, I would now shew what Regeneration, Conversion, and Sanctification are, or wherein they consist.

1. Regeneration is the Infusion of a new Principle of spiritual Life. Naturally Men are

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dead in Trespases and Sins, and, therefore, in order to their acting in a holy and spiritual Manner, a living holy Principle must be communicated to them. Hence the Saints are said to be quickened, that is to say, they are inspired with Life. And this is a new Life, and is a Spring of new Actions. It is called a new Heart, and a new Spirit, and an Heart of Flesh. Grace is not our old Nature made better, and excited unto spiritual Acts; but it is a new Nature produced in our Minds, by the infinite Power and Grace of God. For which Reason we are said to be new Creatures. Something now exists in us, which had no Being in our Minds before. Nothing short of this comes up to the scriptural Account of this Matter. No Excitations, no Impulses, no Aids, however forcible and great they are supposed to be, reach the Intention of the Holy Spirit, in those Phrases, which he uses on this Subject. Besides, our corrupt Nature is not a fit Subject for heavenly Excitations, nor is it possible to bring it in Subjection to the Obedience of Christ. The carnal Mind can never become subject to the Law of God. A bitter Fountain will as soon send forth sweet Streams, which all know is impossible. Regeneration doth not consist in Acts, but in the Production of a Principle disposed unto Actions holy and well-pleasing unto God, by *Jesus Christ*; and, therefore, this Work is instantaneous and wrought on the Mind at once.

2. By

2. By Conversion I understand, what may be called the *primary* Actings of the regenerate Principle. Before I proceed in discoursing on which, I would premise two Things: One is, the human Mind, as it seems to me, is one rational Principle of Operation. The *Schools* have taught us, that there are three distinct Powers of the human Soul, *viz.* the Understanding, the Will, and the Affections. They have done this for the sake of Accuracy, in speaking of the distinct Actings of our Minds. I much question whether this is according to Truth in Philosophy, and I cannot but apprehend, that it hath not been serviceable to the Cause of Truth in Divinity, particularly, in treating on the Subject now under Consideration.

It seems to me, that our intelligent Nature is one Power, and not the Subject of different and distinct Powers, but capable of exerting itself, in various Modes. In Perception, willing, nilling, loving, hating, &c. The other Thing I would premise is this: That Grace is one spiritual Principle of Operation in the Soul, and not, properly speaking, various and distinct Habits seated in our Mind; but able to exert itself after divers Ways. As, in spiritual Perception, holy chusing and refusing, loving and delighting in spiritual Things, in a spiritual Manner, which are commonly spoken of as Acts of so many different and distinct Habits of Grace in our Minds; but I think, that they all proceed

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from one Principle, as their common Root and Spring. If this is true, those Contests, which have arisen and been litigated between *learned Men*, concerning Grace as having one Power of the Mind only for its Subject, and concerning the Impropriety of supposing, that the Grace of Faith is seated in two Powers of the Soul, *viz.* the Understanding and the Will: I say, if this is true, those Contests may soon be issued; and that it is not, I am humbly of Opinion, neither Philosophy, nor Religion will prove. In Conversion, or the primary Actings of the regenerate Principle, may be observed the following Particulars:

(1.) The Mind perceives, or hath a Conviction of its Guiltiness and Impurity. The Soul is impressed with a piercing Sense of Guilt, and it is directed to look into that Fountain, from which have sprung all its sad criminal Actions. And it discerns, that Lust is a Disposition to violate the Law of God, in as great a Variety of Ways, as our reasonable Nature is capable of exerting itself. This is what the *Apostle* designs by the Revival of Sin upon the Entrance of the Law into the Soul. *I was alive without the Law once; but when the Commandment came, Sin revived, and I died* *. Moreover, that spiritual Light which is communicated in Regeneration, enables a Man to see the exceeding Sfulness of Sin, he becomes now really acquainted with the Malignity of Sin, in its Nature, as it is contrary

to the holy Law of God, which is a Transcript of his infinitely pure and holy Nature. And from that arises an Abhorrence of it, as a most vile and loathsome Thing.

(2.) The Demerit of Sin is also discerned. That the Wages of it, is eternal Death, or the Loss of Divine Favour, and suffering a dreadful and terrible Sense of the Anger of God, and that for ever. From which arise many bitter Self-Reproaches, and most keen Reflections, on Account of Sin committed. And the Equity of the Constitution in the Law, that Sin shall expose to such terrible Punishment, is heartily acknowledged. Thus, a Person's *Mouth is stopped*, and he confesses himself to *be guilty before God*, or justly liable to his awful Vengeance, for his numerous Transgressions, and the *Plague* of his Heart. Hence he cries out, *What shall I do to be saved? In what Way may I escape my dreadful Doom*, according to the Law, and obtain Life and Happiness? Rest and Peace are at the greatest Distance, and it is in vain to hope for them, in this State, says a Person under this Conviction.

(3.) The poor Sinner is convinced of the absolute Impossibility of contributing, in the least Degree to his Recovery out of this miserable Condition. Many Ways are usually suggested to the Mind, to this End; but as none of them are safe for a Person to trust unto, by the Light of Divine Grace, the poor Sinner sees the Vanity of them all, and that

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it would be acting a most egregiously foolish Part, in him, to propose placing any *Confidence in the Flesh*. That it would be building on the Sand, and, that, therefore, the Fall of the Superstructure must be certain, in a Time of Temptation and Trial.

(4.) God in infinite Goodness and Compassion, by his Holy Spirit, discovers *Christ* in his Suitableness, Ability and Tenderness, as a Saviour, unto the poor trembling Sinner. The Merit of his Obedience, the Merit of his Sacrifice, and the Treasures of his Grace, are presented to the View of the Soul for its Encouragement, Support and Relief in this distressed Condition. And the Prospect of a Redeemer, under a Sense of Guilt, its Nakedness, Pollution, and great Want of Holiness, as a Meetness for Heaven, prevents the Mind, overwhelmed with Grief, from sinking into Despondency. Hence,

(5.) Desires of an Interest in *Christ* spring up in the Mind, and it resolves to look for Salvation, in no other Way. For it is fully convinced, that Security can only be had in this; and it also discerns, in some Measure, the Glory of this Method of Salvation. And, though the poor Sinner heartily acknowledges, that *Christ* might very justly reject him, and refuse to shew him Favour, yet he will not hearken unto what carnal Reason may tender for his Peace, under this Trouble. And, therefore,

(6.) He

(6.) He humbly applies to *Christ*, as the only Way of Salvation, and escaping Divine Vengeance. A Man reasons thus with himself: If I continue to go on in the Practice of Sin, certain Destruction will be the Consequence of it: And if I yield the best Obedience I am able, that cannot justify me before God, and give me a Right to eternal Life, because it will not be such, as the Law requires to those Ends; and, therefore Ruin, and that for ever, is unavoidable, in that Way. He argues much after the same Manner, as the *Lepers* did, who sat at the Gate of *Samaria*, and said, *if we sit here, we shall die, if we enter into the City, the Famine is in the City, we shall die there. If we fall into the Hands of the Assyrians, and they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we can but die.* So says the broken-hearted Sinner, if I gratify my Lusts, I am sure Destruction will follow, and if I perform Duty, and depend on that, nothing but endless Misery is before me: *Christ* is the alone Way of Peace and Safety; unto him therefore, will I apply myself, if he shews me Compassion I shall live, if he refuses so to do, I can but die, and therefore, I will throw myself at his Feet, and if *I perish, I perish*: As *Esther* said, when she went into the Presence of *Ahasuerus*, without an Order for it. And this Application unto *Christ* is made with a deep Sense of our own Unworthiness, and with Speed, as a Man-slayer hastened to the City

Sometimes great Importunity is used, with a most frank and full Acknowledgment of our Vileness, and unworthiness. It is with us as with the *Canaanitish* Woman, who upon a Repulse from *Christ*, not out of Unkindness to her; but to try her Faith, said, *Truth, Lord, yet the Dogs eat of the Crumbs, which fall from their Master's Table*; so we in this Application to a Redeemer confess, that we are so vile and so unworthy, that no Name of Reproach is too severe to be applied to us; but notwithstanding that, we are determined to lie at the Feet of *Jesus*, and implore His Help, who came into the World to save the chief of Sinners. Oh! sad Truth, says the Soul, I am justly described by that Character, and therefore, it is fit, I should abuse myself in the very Dust, and eternally own, that Shame and Confusion belong to me: But O precious Truth! *Christ* came to save even such, and, therefore, it may be, that I may obtain Mercy, and find Favour with Him. However in Him alone will I place my Hope.

(7.) This Act is a Receiving of *Christ* for a Saviour, Sometimes, by a Reception of *Christ* and his Benefits, we intend a Man's appropriating Him and His Salvation to Himself, or his concluding upon it, that *Christ* is his, and all saving Blessings, which flow from Him; this is Faith grown up into Assurance. But that is not what I here design, but a Person's Choice of *Christ* to be his Saviour, his Approbation of Him in that Character,
not

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not only from the Consideration of the Necessity of an Interest in Him in order to his Safety ; but also from an Apprehension, in some Measure, of the Condescency and Fitness of delivering us from Ruin alone through His Blood, Righteousness and Grace. Upon this View, although we may be attended with many Doubts and Fears, relating unto our Interest in *Christ*, and in His Salvation, here we fix all the Hope we have, and are fully resolved, never to embrace any other Object for our Trust and Confidence, let what will be the Issue. Now, this is a real and true Reception of *Christ*, as He is proposed to us for our Acceptance in the Gospel : Or it is believing in Him, and taking Him for our Saviour, if saved we shall be. And those, who are assisted thus to apply to Him for Salvation from Sin, and all its dismal Effects, have no Reason to doubt of the Truth of their Faith, nor of the Love, Compassion, and Care of a tender Redeemer, who will not cast out any who come to Him.

(8.) This Act grants to God the Authority of His Law : The Rights of His Justice : And it greatly honours *Christ*, though the Soul for Want of Skill in spiritual Things may not discern it.

[1.] There is in this Act an hearty Acknowledgment of the just Authority of God in the Law, as He commands perfect Holiness, and condemns the Creature for the Want of it.

[2.]

[2.] That it would be equal and righteous; in God to recompense the Evil of Sin, with the Evil of Punishment. The poor Sinner hath nothing to object to the Justice of his eternal Damnation, and this he freely confesses, and it is supposed in his Application to *Christ* for Salvation, for it is only on the Ground of free and sovereign Grace and Mercy.

[3.] *Christ* receives from us in this Act, that Glory which is His Due, in the Character of a Saviour from Sin, both in its Guilt and Power. For, herein we look to Him alone for Remission, Peace, Acceptation with God, and Sanctification, or for Strength against every Lust, and for Grace to dispose and quicken us unto the Practice of every Duty. If we duly considered how much we glorify God in this Act, and honour the blessed *Jesus*, we should not be so disconsolate and mourn, as sometimes we do, through Temptations, Jealousies, Fears, and Questionings about our Safety; but we should rather rejoice, in that, in some Degree, we glorify God, and do honour to a dear Redeemer, and with some Measure of Chearfulness, we should proceed in a Renewal of such solemn and humble Acts of Application to *Christ* our precious and only Saviour. It is a certain Truth, that *Christ* is precious, to those who believe, and it is equally true, that those, to whom He is precious *really* believe in Him.

Bishop *Hopkins* speaks thus on the Subject of Regeneration: " Discoveries of the most
" spiritual

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“ spiritual Objects carnal Hearts may have made
“ unto them ; they may see their lost Estate by
“ Nature, the Way of Recovery by Grace, the
“ Suitableness of *Christ* to their Souls, the
“ Riches of His Grace, the Freeness of His
“ Love, the Readiness of His Heart, to save
“ them, the Desirableness of Happiness, and the
“ Beauties of Holiness, and yet for all this
“ remain still in a carnal and unregenerate
“ State”. For which he assigns two Reasons.

“ 1. This Illumination, says he, is a barren
“ Light. 2. It is an ineffectual idle Light.”
In his Works, p. 543.

In these Assertions, I apprehend, that he is grossly mistaken. For, 1. According to what Principle a Man sees *Christ* in His Excellency, according to that Principle he chooses Him. The Understanding never receives spiritual Light, without a Communication of Grace to direct and determine the Will to make Choice of the glorious Objects, which the Understanding, as enlightened, discerns. Or, rather as the human Mind is one rational Principle of Operation, if it is sanctified, it acts spiritually in Willing, as well as in Perception. 2. There is that in the Nature of true Faith, which distinguishes it from a temporary Faith : And that is an Apprehension of *Christ*'s Amiability and Excellency, as a Saviour, and the Value of his Benefits, in themselves, whereupon, a Person seeks after Him, and His Benefits, which a temporary Faith does not.
3. This Faith is quickening and transforming
in

in the Mind, and changes it into the Likeness of *Christ*. No Man sees the Glory of the Lord, without being changed into the heavenly Image from Glory to Glory. It is not only Light, but it is Life and Heat also. It is not ineffectual and idle, but operative, and influences unto holy Acts. And, therefore, the *Bishop* was altogether deceived. It is impossible, without spiritual Light, spiritually to discern our Misery: Or the Way of Recovery by Grace: Or the Suitableness of *Christ* to our Souls: Or the Riches of His Grace: Or the Freeness of His Love: Or the Readiness of His Heart to save us: Or the Desirableness of Happiness: Or the Beauties of Holiness. It is only spiritual Light which enables us in a spiritual Manner to discern spiritual Things; and if the Mind is possessed of spiritual Light, it is not destitute of Holiness, for they are inseparable. A more discouraging Observation, I never met with; but it is far from being true, in any Branch of it.

Other Acts also flow from this Principle, viz. Repentance, which is a Sorrow for Sin, and Abhorrence of it, as Sin, and an earnest Desire to forsake it, and to be completely delivered from it. An Approbation of the Law, as holy, just, and good. Fear and Reverence of God. These I call the primary Actings of Grace, which immediately follow upon Regeneration, and are true Conversion: Or a turning from Sin, Self, and Satan unto God. Which we have seen is necessary to future
Blessedness.

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Blessedness. They are included in that Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord. In some, these Actings are more vigorous than in others, and, consequently, they are more perceptible to a Man's self, I say to a Man's self, because they are internal Acts, and, therefore, not discernable by any Person, but himself. The Fruits hereof are external visible Acts in the Conduct of a Man, which fall under the Observation of others.

3. Sanctification consists in what, I think, may be called the *secondary* Actings of Grace, and is inclusive of the primary Acts of the spiritual Principle, which are mentioned above.

(1.) Sanctification consists in a Denial of our corrupt Inclinations: Or, in an Abstinence from Sin, out of a Regard to the Authority of God in the Law. Which evidently supposes an Approbation of, both the Precepts and Prohibitions of the Law, or, a Liking of what it commands, as good and holy, and an Aversion unto what it forbids, as evil and vile. This latter is usually called Mortification, and is one considerable Branch of our Sanctification. Wherein we ought especially, in a very strict Manner to regard the Principles and Views, upon which we act, in our Opposition to Lust. For there may be an Abstinence from Acts of Evil, without a *Grain* of Holiness in the Heart. If we forsake Sin, only from some *prudential* Considerations: Or, through the Influence of *legal* Motives and
Ends,

Ends, Concupiscence maintains its Rule in our Minds, and will continue so to do. But it is to be feared, that many are insensible of this, and content themselves with a *bare* Denial to gratify the Flesh in external Acts, and take it to be true Mortification, whereas, in Fact, real Mortification of Sin, they are *utterly* Strangers unto. And those, who are truly gracious, do not always abstain from sinful Actions, upon Considerations of a pure, holy, and spiritual Nature. For there be many Motives unto this Abstinence from Evil, which have great Influence on the Mind, that arise not from the Principle of Grace in the Souls of the Saints; and, therefore, there is great Need, *narrowly* to observe our Hearts, and *closely* to examine upon what Views we act; without this, there will be little of *real* Holiness, though our Conduct may be such, as raises it above the Censure of those, who know us best. If we are engaged in a spiritual Manner, in this *most* necessary Branch of our Duty, our Minds will take into Consideration the evil Nature of Sin. The many Obligations we are under, as Christians, to leave every Vice, arising from the Will of God, that we should be *holy in all Manner of Conversation, and Godliness*, and from the great and numerous Acts of Goodness he hath put forth, in our Favour, from a Sense of the manifold Benefits, which we receive from him, merely on the Foundation of Kindness

L unmerited.

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unmerited. Never let us think, that we are any farther holy, than we act under the Influence of such like Considerations, and Motives; for if we do, we shall form a mistaken Opinion of ourselves: If we are not deceived, as to the Being of Grace in our Souls, we certainly shall be, as to the Degrees of it. It is a very dangerous Mistake to think, that all Opposition to Sin, is real Mortification. And, therefore, let us look well to our Ends, and our Frames in all our Actions. If we fail in this Thing, very little *real* Holiness will be found in our Walk before God, how free from Blame soever, it may be in the Sight of Men.

(2.) The other Branch of Sanctification consists, in an Attendance to holy Duties, and the Exercise of Grace therein. The Performance of Duty, without the Exercise of Grace, brings no Glory to God, nor any spiritual Advantage to our Souls. We may maintain the Practice of religious Services, in a regular Manner, and yet be very far from that Spirituality, and heavenly Mindedness, which our Profession calls for. If our Graces are not acted in those Services, the Discharge of them is no Evidence at all, of our Improvement and Increase in Holiness, wherein lies the true Nature of Sanctification, as it is a progressive Work upon our Minds. Regeneration is Sanctification *radically*: The Advancement of Purity and Spirituality

rituality in our Souls, is our Sanctification progressively considered. The Holy Spirit is the efficient Cause of it. As Grace in the Principle is his Production; so the Vigour and Increase thereof, is effected by his benign Influences. And many precious Considerations, he suggests to the Mind to strengthen and invigorate the gracious Principle in us, *viz.* the Love of God to us. The tender and intense Affection of the blessed *Jesus*. The Greatness of that Salvation, which we enjoy through his Obedience, and Sacrifice. The Dignity that is conferred upon us, as we are constituted Sons to God, by a sovereign Act of his immense Goodness. The Title we have to all spiritual and eternal Blessings, in Consequence of our being brought into that Relation. Our Union to Christ is another Consideration, whereby our Hearts are excited earnestly to desire a Conformity to him, in Meekness, Lowliness, Patience, Submission to the Will of God, and in every other Grace. Moreover, the Divine Spirit gives us Views of the Glory of the Lord, in the Glass of the Gospel, whereby we are changed into the *heavenly Image from Glory to Glory*. He that expects an Increase of Grace and Holiness in any other Way, will certainly find himself *sadly* mistaken in his Expectations, let his Endeavours be what they may. The new Creature cannot be nourished and improved, but by feeding upon, and digesting spiritual Food,


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which is Christ the Bread of Life, unless we receive the *nourishing* Milk, and *generous* Wine of the Gospel, we shall languish and decline in our spiritual Part. The Want of this, through one Cause or another, is the Occasion of that *Leanness* of Soul, which most complain of, at this Time, and it is to be feared, not without great Reason,

C H A P.

C H A P. V.

Of the Assurance of Faith.

- I.  Assurance may be considered objectively and subjectively. The former relates to the Objects on which Faith is supposed to act.

This is a firm Persuasion of the Truth and Existence of those Objects. For Instance, that the Son of God came into our World, and that by his Obedience and Sacrifice, he secured the Salvation of some Men, or, *obtained eternal Redemption for them.* And this is necessarily supposed in all Acts of Recumbency and Dependence on him for Deliverance from Sin, and the penal Consequences of it. By the latter is intended, a Persuasion in the Mind of a poor Sinner of his particular Interest in Christ, and in his Salvation.

II. This latter is not essential to that Faith which is of the Operation of God, as I apprehend. Several Reasons induce me to think, that true Faith may be, and is sometimes acted where this Assurance is wanting. 1. Faith is sometimes expressed by such Phrases, as do not necessarily include it, *viz.* seeing of Christ coming unto him, hoping in the Lord, and *if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* An Assurance of the Object is plainly sup-

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posed in all these; but not the Assurance of an Interest in him to whom Application is made for Help and Relief. 2. There is little or small Faith, which is attended with Fears, Jealousies, and Doubting. *O! thou of little Faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?* 3. There is a *strong* and a *weak* Faith; the latter cannot well be thought to include this Assurance in it; for if it does, it will be difficult to shew, wherein the Difference lies, between the strong and feeble Actings of this Grace. 4. In Christ's Family, there are different Classes of Christians. All are Subjects of the same Grace in Kind, but not in Degree. Some are *Babes*, not grown up to any considerable Pitch of Knowledge, Experience, and spiritual Strength. And in his Fold there are some *Lambs*, who are to be dealt very tenderly with; it does not seem very likely, that these, at present, enjoy that strong Consolation, which carries the Mind above all Discouragements and Fears. Yet,

III. This Favour may be enjoyed.

1. This may be argued with very strong Evidence, from the Nature of Divine Promises, relating to Salvation. A conditional Promise of Benefits, neither ascertains the Enjoyment of them, in Fact, nor is a proper Foundation for an assured Persuasion of receiving them: But absolute Promises ascertain the Possession of that Good they express, if the Promiser is faithful to his Word, and in promising exceeds not his Power; and are a firm

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Bottom for an Assurance of the Reception of it. All Divine Promises relating to Salvation are absolute; *I will*, and *they shall*, is the Form wherein they run; and, therefore, they ascertain Salvation, in Fact, and are a solid Basis of a steady Assurance of it. Since their Nature is suited to ingenerate and support such a Persuasion, God doubtless had this gracious End in expressing them. And if he had such an Intention, that must respect, either the World, or the Church. Not the World certainly, and, therefore, the Church. Again, the Church is triumphant and militant. These Promises are intended then, either to confirm and establish the Faith of the Church triumphant, or militant. Not the Church triumphant, and, consequently, this must respect the Church militant. And as all Generals consist of Particulars, every Particular is included in the General; hence, it follows, that all the Saints have Right to that strong Consolation, which the Promises of God are fitted in their Nature to produce; and it is possible, in the Nature of the Thing, that they all may, and not to be doubted, but some do, at least, at some Seasons, enjoy it.

2. God, in confirming his Promises with his *Oath*, had this gracious End in View, that those who *have fled for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope set before them*, might have that *strong Consolation*, which attends, or arises from an Assurance of his Favour to them, and their Security in Consequence thereof. Two Things

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are clearly expressed in those Words. (1.) An Act of Faith on Christ, fleeing for Refuge to him; and this is supposed to be done antecedent to the Enjoyment of that strong Consolation. True Faith, therefore, may be without it. (2.) That they should enjoy strong Consolation, who thus flee to Christ for Safety and Salvation from Sin.

3. The witnessing and sealing of the Holy Spirit evidently prove, that an Assurance of an Interest in the Love of God may be enjoyed by the Saints, *Rom. viii. 17. Eph. i. 13.* The latter Text evinces the Precedency of Faith to Sealing, as well as expresses this holy Persuasion, through the Influence of the Spirit upon the Mind, as a Witness, after believing. And the very same Point of Doctrine is deducible from his Operations, as the Spirit of Adoption. He enables Believers to address God, as their Father, with *Boldness, Liberty, and Confidence*, through Jesus Christ; and this he doth at some Seasons, wherein they have the greatest Sense of their Guilt, Pollution, and Unworthiness.

4. Many of the People of God have expressed their Persuasion of an Interest in his Love, and the glorious Benefits springing from that Fountain. *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Who loved me, and gave himself for me.* It would be too tedious to multiply Testimonies of this Kind, which might be done, for they are very numerous in the Scripture. Nor is it to be
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apprehended, that this was peculiar to Persons inspired; for the *Apostle John* expresses this Matter in the Name of Christians in general. *We have known and believed the Love, that God hath unto us.* If it is not one main Design of that *Epistle* to prove this Point, it must be allowed, that many Things are therein delivered, which abundantly confirm it. And this can't be peculiar to *Prophets, Apostles*, or inspired Persons, nor arise from Inspiration: Because some have been inspired who had no Faith at all, as *Balaam*, for Instance, and holy Persons have not always enjoyed it when under Inspiration. Inspiration, and this holy Persuasion, therefore, are distinct Things, and the latter does not necessarily attend, or arise from the former.

5. I am humbly of Opinion, that this great and glorious Privilege, might be more commonly enjoyed, than it is, if Professors, were wisely cautious in behaving themselves. It is by no means to be thought, that this Jewel is to be attained, without the diligent Use of those Means, which God hath appointed for our Increase and Growth in Grace: Greater Self-Denial, Watchfulness against Sin, and carnal Pleasures, Mortification to our worldly Interests: With the assiduous Practice of religious Duties, *viz.* Prayer, Reading the Word of God, instead of *vain Plays, idle Romances, and empty Novels*, the *fashionable* Books of our Times; Meditation, and a frequent Review of our spiritual Experience, and a conscientious

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Attendance on the Worship of God, are the appointed Means of our Advancement in heavenly Knowledge. These are Things to which many Professors discover but little Inclination. Let not such, who doubtless must be destitute of this Assurance whereof we speak, dream of attaining it in their present Frame of Mind, and Course of Behaviour, for if they do, their Imaginations of this Sort will certainly prove deceiving Dreams indeed.

6. All Believers have a proper and certain Evidence within them, of their Interest in Divine Favour. Grace in the Hearts of the Saints, is an Effect of God's Love to them, and his gracious Purposes concerning them. And, therefore, from the Being of Grace in their Souls, they may safely infer, that they are Objects of Divine Love, and interested in all those Blessings, which take Rise therefrom.

7. Some through causeless Fears and Jealousies are prevented enjoying this Assurance. They are afraid, because Sin is in them as an active and restless Principle, that they have no contrary Principle of Holiness, and because in Part, they are still carnal, that they are not spiritual Persons, because Grace is but feebly acted in their Minds, that they are void of it. And, because for a Season, they enjoy not strong Consolation, that they have no Title to it, or any spiritual Blessings. These Jealousies and Fears, at least, evidence a Desire of Grace, which certainly springs from a gracious

cious Principle, for the Desire of Grace is proper to Grace. The Want of Skill in these Persons, to distinguish between the Motions of the Flesh, and those of the Spirit, or of Attention to both, within themselves, and of a Consideration of the new Covenant, according to whose Nature, God will always proceed towards them, are the Occasions of their distressing Fears.

IV. When this holy Assurance is maintained in the Souls of Believers, it influences them unto a humble and close Walk with God. Pride, Carnality, and Neglect of Duty are not Attendants of the Assurance of Faith. If Lusts, either of the Flesh, or of the Mind are indulged, and a Man is careless and negligent in his Conversation, let him not imagine, that this Favour is vouchsafed to him, by the blessed Spirit. For when the Spirit of God operates as a Comforter, He also does as a Sanctifier. This strong Consolation is never enjoyed, without a heavenly Constraint upon the Mind to love God, and chearfully obey Him. It is probable, that some may mistake in this Matter, and take a *merely rational* Conclusion for this Assurance, wherein the holy Spirit has no Concern, *viz.* Thus, a Man reflects upon his past Experience of Divine Goodness, as he thinks, in former Seasons, and says, within himself, this must have been the Work of God upon me; I, therefore, am the Subject of his Grace, and interested in his Love. But if he thus reflects, and thus reasons, when his
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Condition, and the general Frame of his Mind call loudly upon him to the Duties of Humiliation, and Sorrow for Sin, spiritual Sloth, and criminal Indulgences, he may assure himself, that in this the Divine Sanctifier has no concern, and that the Conclusion he has drawn, contains nothing of that holy Assurance in it, whereof we now speak. There is, I think, such a Difference between the merely rational Actings of our own Minds, in this Business, and the blessed Guidance of the Holy Spirit, in our reflecting upon his Work on our Souls, as is easily discernable to the Saints: And they are greatly wanting to themselves, with regard to their spiritual Peace, and solid Comfort, if they neglect to attend to that Difference, in this Review of their past Acts. In the former, only Ease and Quiet are sought after, in which consists carnal Security. In the latter, Strength against Sin, and a Renewal of the Vigour of Grace which has fallen under a Decay. And present direct Acts of Faith are put forth, in this latter, which are not in the former.

V. It is our Duty to endeavour to obtain it. We ought to be thankful for the lowest Measure of Faith; but not content ourselves with a low Degree of Grace, because the Being of Grace in our Hearts, though small, is an Evidence of our Safety. As far as any Thing of this Nature is found in us, so far we have just Cause well to examine ourselves, lest at last we prove mistaken, in cherishing
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ing Hopes of a real Conversion. *This can be no Sign of it.* For it is in the Nature of the new Creature, to desire both its Preservation and Improvement. The Neglect hereof can only arise from the Flesh, its Opposite and Combatant. Nothing is more inculcated upon us, than this Endeavour after an Advancement in Holiness and Spirituality: *Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure; and add to your Faith, Virtue, &c. and let us go on to Perfection;* with various other Exhortations of the same Kind, which plainly prove, that this is a Duty indispensably incumbent on us. But, alas! we are very defective herein, which is the Cause of that slow Progress we make in the Knowledge of heavenly Things, and to this, is owing very much, that Want of the Savour and Relish of them, which too visibly appears in most Professors, at this Day.

VI. Great Advantages attend it. Spiritual Peace, which greatly differs from that carnal Security, that usually is the Concomitant of a back-sliding Frame. Joy in God, which causes us to despise those *low* and *evanid* Pleasures, wherewith our corrupt Minds are too apt to be delighted. Freedom and Boldness in our Addresses at the Throne of Grace. Thankfulness and Gratitude to our heavenly Father, for all the good and inestimable Blessings he is pleased to confer upon us. *Blessed be the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us, &c.* This Strength of Faith

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Faith will enable us, to give Glory to God, even under such Dispensations as are most trying to it. What Difficulties will it not surmount, what Afflictions will it not bear, with Calmness, Submission, Patience, yea with Triumph? Since such Advantages arise to ourselves, and such Glory to God from this Faith, shall we think any Thing too hard a Labour to attain it, or any Thing too dear and valuable to part with for its Enjoyment? We are Fools if we do.

There is no Inconsistency at all, between a Persuasion of the Necessity of a strict and regular Attendance to Duty, on our Part, in order to the Enjoyment of a Sense of Divine Favour, and a Belief, that our Growth in Grace, entirely depends on the Efficiency of the Holy Spirit. As to the Acknowledgment of the latter, and a steady Regard to it, as a precious and indubitable Truth, I will not give Place to *any Man in the World*. But then, on the other Hand, *I am equally satisfied*, that it is only, in the Ways of Holiness, any have Reason to hope for the benign Influences of the Spirit of God, in order to the Strengthening and Increase of Grace in their Hearts. A *careless, negligent, and loose* Walk, will always be followed with *dreadful* Effects. The *bitter* Weeds, the *Briars*, and *Thorns* of Corruption, of one Kind, or other, will grow, and Grace will decline. *Sad* Instances of the Truth of this our Times abound with. All Pretensions unto the present

ent Enjoyment of the Assurance of Faith, and those, whose Conversation is unbecoming the Gospel, are *groundless*, if they ever enjoyed that Favour. In some, it is to be feared, that, at last, it will appear, that they never were by the Holy Spirit sealed unto the Day of Redemption, notwithstanding all that Confidence, with which they have expressed themselves.

This is an Observation not intended for any, who are *mourning* under a Sense of their Sins, and Sinfulness, whatever their Revolts may have been, through the Violence of Temptation, and the Strength of Lust stirred up by it. Far be it from me, to offer any Thing, which hath the least Tendency, to *break the bruised Reed, and quench the smoking Flax*. But the Condition of some, *who are at Ease in Zion*, calls for awakening Reproof, that, at least, they may not have it to say, that they were suffered to *go down into the Chambers of Death*, without any Warning given to them of their Danger.

Object. Some perhaps will say, this Doctrine of Assurance of Safety and Security, or a firm Persuasion of an Interest in Christ, and in His Salvation, is not a likely Method to promote Holiness: For if a Man enjoys a certain Hope of being happy hereafter, what need he concern himself about the Manner of his Behaviour? His Sins are pardoned, his Person is justified, he is an Heir of Heaven, and his Title to eternal Life is unalienable;
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can it, therefore, be expected of him, that he should *watch, pray, fight*, since his future Welfare is a Thing certain in itself, and he knows it to be so?

Answ. 1. Such, who thus object, are of a different Opinion from our Saviour, who plainly told some, that their Sins were pardoned. *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* And, *her Sins, which are many, are forgiven.* Besides, as He predicted to *Peter* his Denial of Him, He acquainted him with that Interest he had in His prevalent Intercession: *I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not*, and expressly mentions his Recovery: *When thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren.* This Objection, therefore, is levelled against the Wisdom of our blessed Saviour; and if its Force is admitted, it must be at the Expence of His Want of Care about the suitable Behaviour of His Followers. This is a Consideration sufficient entirely to sink the Objection, and to cause its Authors to blush, if they had the least Degree of Modesty left. But,

2. Who are the Persons, that from an Assurance of an Interest in Christ, and in his saving Benefits, can be supposed, upon that Assurance, will grow remiss and careless about the Practice of their Duty? They must be either unregenerate, or regenerate Persons. The Unregenerate cannot have this Assurance, and, therefore, they cannot abuse it in the Manner the Objection supposes. And, consequently,

sequently, if it is thus abused, it must be by regenerate sanctified Men. From what Principle in them, can this Abuse of so precious a Favour spring? It must be either from the Flesh, or from the Spirit. That it cannot arise from the latter is, I suppose, a Truth evident to all. And what if the Flesh is inclined to abuse this, or any other Divine Truth, is that a sufficient Reason for the Rejection of it? Surely it is not. He who is insensible, that there is that in him, which is inclined to take Occasion to sin from the Commandment in the Law, as well as from the Promises of the Gospel, is a Stranger to the *Plague* of his Heart. But is it proper, for that Reason, to part with either the Law, or the Gospel? Certainly it is not. This is an undoubted Truth, that, that in Men, which abuses the Gospel, it will also pervert and abuse the Law; and, therefore, if we admit this *shameful* Objection, we can retain neither the Law, nor the Gospel.

3. Since it is only the Flesh, which can be guilty of thus abusing the Doctrine treated of: How absurd is it to imagine, that a Man can enjoy this Assurance, while he is *pampering and gratifying the Flesh*? That Man deceives himself, who is confident of enjoying future Happiness, which consists very much in a perfect Freedom from all Sin, who allows himself in the present Practice of it. I *utterly* deny, that, that Man desires to be free from Sin hereafter, who does not desire to forsake it now.

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This Assurance, therefore, cannot, in Fact, give the least Encouragement to Sin. It is an Act of the spiritual Part in a Believer, which never gives any Advantage to the fleshly Part in him.

4. It is a sacred Truth, and as such it is firmly believed by us, that *Faith without Works is dead*. This Grace *purifies the Heart*, and it produces good Works in the Life of him, who is the Subject of it. How then can this excellent Grace be, where the genuine Fruits of it are not found? This Objection is no better than *mere Calumny*, designed to traduce and reproach a precious evangelical Truth. But this is nothing new, nor strange. If some Sort of Men did not despise, reject and slander Divine Truths, it would be a strong Temptation to me, to think myself mistaken, in esteeming them such. For the *Things of the Spirit of God* will always be *Foolishness* to some Men.

5. Those, who thus object, either express the Part which they themselves would act, upon such a Persuasion, or they do not. If they do not, why is it that they object after this Manner? If they do, and are in earnest, I am not afraid, nor ashamed to tell them, that they are Strangers to Grace and Holiness; and if they have no other Principle, than what, at present, influences and determines them, nothing is more certain, than that they will descend into the bottomless Pit, from whence there is no Redemption. That Man, to whom it would be a Satisfaction to continue in Sin, upon having an Assurance of Impunity, most
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certainly is in the broad Road to Destruction. He, who desires not to be holy now, is dreadfully mistaken, if he imagines, that he desires Holiness hereafter. The eternal Ruin of such Sort of Persons, whose real Principle this Objection expresses, is inevitable, without sovereign Grace and Mercy works a Change in their Hearts; and their everlasting Damnation will be just. If any pretend unto an Assurance of the Pardon of their Sin, and of the Salvation of their Souls, by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, who have no Experience of *heartly* Sorrow for Sin, Indignation against it, and against themselves, because of their Transgressions, they know nothing at all what that holy Assurance is. They undoubtedly are, *in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bonds of Iniquity*. Some such *bold* Pretenders, and *impious* Boasters it may be there are; but their Condition is most dreadful, for Death, eternal Death, in Fact, can only be expected by them. I am sure, that Heaven is not their Choice, and, that they have nothing to look for, but the *fiery* Vengeance of an incensed God. This I know is true, that Assurance of Pardon through the Blood of the Son of God, never fails to produce in the Mind, the greatest Abhorrence of Sin, and the most earnest Desires of its *utter* Destruction.

C H A P. VI.

Of the Life of Faith.

✱✱✱✱ Inquisitive and contemplative Men,
 ✱ I ✱ who enjoyed not Divine Revelation,
 ✱✱✱✱ have wrote much concerning the happy Life. They were greatly divided in their Sentiments about it, and really were ignorant of that Life. The Holy Scripture plainly informs us what it is, and sets before us *shining* Examples of it, for our Encouragement and Imitation. That is a Life of Faith on Christ. The Apostle *Paul* acquaints us, that such was his Life: *The Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God.* He not only was a Subject of that Divine Grace; but he lived in the Exercise of it, without which no solid Satisfaction and Pleasure can be enjoyed, let our Circumstances, as Men, be ever so *easy* and *affluent*: In that Life, we shall derive from the glorious Object of Faith, full Contentment, settled Tranquillity, and permanent Joy, how much soever we are tried and afflicted. And, therefore, an Enquiry into it, is not unlikely to be instructive and beneficial to us.

I. The Objects of Faith are Things invincible: Such as could not have been discovered,

vered, without Revelation. *They are Things which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, which have not entered into the Heart of Man.* Hence, the Grace of Faith is thus defined: *Now Faith is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen.* The Life of Faith is taking a frequent Prospect of them, and conversing with them. And this is to have our Conversation in Heaven.

II. This is a Life above the *delectable* Things of this World. There is not any Thing upon Earth congruous in its Nature to this *noble* and *Heaven-born* Grace; it is of a far more *exalted* and *sublime* Nature, than the *most splendid* of sublunary Enjoyments. They are *mere Trifles* in its Esteem. And as this new Creature wants them not for its Support, and Nourishment, it covets them not for its Diversion, and Pleasure. A Person, who is the Subject of this Principle, may indeed covet, and be delighted with those *gaudy Toys*; but not *according to that Principle*. It is not Grace in any Man, which *thirsts* after, and is *fond* of the *glittering* Objects of Time and Sense; but the Opposite of Grace, for that raises the Soul far higher than this earthly Globe, even to Heaven itself, *where Christ sitteth at the right Hand of God.* And, therefore, if we are Strangers to an Elevation of Mind, above the *choicest* terrene Things, we are unacquainted with the only happy Life, *viz.* that of Faith. For, in the Ex-

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ercise of that Grace, we enter into that within the Veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered. And the Prospects we take of those infinitely excelling Objects, which there we view, cause us to disregard the *brightest* Things the World can boast of.

III. Faith carries the Mind above the afflictive and distressing Things of this World. As it swims not upon a Torrent of terrestrial Pleasures, so it is not depressed by a heavy Weight of worldly Sorrows. It smiles not on the *gayest* Things of this mortal State, nor hath it any Sadness of Countenance, when it is deprived of all earthly Enjoyments. Its Language is: *Although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines; the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat; the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there be no Herd in the Stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation* *. In Prosperity it is humble and modest; in Affliction, it is submissive and patient; because it is persuaded, *that all Things work together for good, to them who love God, and are the Called according to His Purpose* †. It glories in Tribulation, which worketh Patience, Patience Experience, and Experience Hope, and Hope maketh not ashamed; the Love of God, being shed abroad in the Heart, by the Holy Ghost.

IV. It

* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

† Rom. viii. 28.

IV. It is a Life contrary to the evil Part of the Believer, and above his better Part. Faith is a Combatant with the Flesh, in all its Lusts, and is a holy Resolution to gratify neither those of the sensual, nor intellectual Kind: And it vehemently longs for the Extirpation of both out of the Mind. And as it is a Life of Opposition to Sin, it is a Life above itself. Faith feeds upon Christ, the heavenly and *hidden Manna*, and it drinks of the pure delightful Streams, which flow from the River of God's eternal Love; whereby, it is refreshed and much invigorated. If Grace at any Time looks upon its own Beauty, it is not in order to Self-Contentment and Admiration; but with an Intention to raise the Mind, chearfully to engage in the delightful Service of Adoration and Praise to the lovely Redeemer, whose beautiful Image it is. And it expects all Supplies of Wisdom and Strength from the Father of Glory, in every needful Season. Again, in the Matter of Consolation, it regards itself, only as an Evidence to itself of its Divine Original, as an Encouragement to hope for Succour in Temptations, Assistance in all Difficulties, and renewed Comfort in every Trouble, from the Gracious and Almighty Hand, which formed it in the Soul. The Source of its Being, is the Origin of its Joy, *viz.* the Grace of God in Christ. This is, therefore, a Life, contrary to our fleshly Part, and above our spiritual Part; Faith places all its Trust in another, and derives all its Peace,

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Comfort and Pleasure from Christ, who *is all in all* unto every *real* Christian.

V. The Life of Faith supposes a frequent Exercise of that excellent Grace. A Man's Life is the general Course of his Actions. A Person is said to live a good Life, if his Conduct in the general is good: An ill Life, if his Actions in the general Course of them are evil. And so, the Christian may be said to live a Life of Faith, if that Grace is often acted, and his Duties are discharged in Faith. That alone denominates them *the Obedience of Faith*. If we multiply Duties, and keep up a regular Practice of them, without the Exercise of this Grace therein, we bring no Glory to God, nor do our Souls receive any spiritual Advantage by them. By this Exercise of the Grace of Faith, I mean direct Acts of it, on the Person, Blood, Righteousness, and Fulness of Christ, and upon the Grace, Kindness, and Mercy of God through Him. This frequent Renewal of direct Acts of Faith, is necessary to our spiritual Peace, Joy, and Fruitfulness in good Works, to the Praise and Glory of God. And, therefore, if we do not seek after this renewing of the Acts of this Grace, we may go on from *Month to Month*, from *Year to Year*, in a *low, withering*; and *starving* Condition of Soul. Which, it is to be feared, is the *sorrowful* Condition of many Professors, at this Time. It is not the *bare* Discharge of Duties, though ever so many, that will preserve our Minds,
in

in a heavenly spiritual Frame. Without the Exercise of Faith in them, they are only *lifeless, dull*, and *formal* Performances, wherein God is not honoured, nor our Souls profited. It is well if the *best* are not guilty of too much overlooking this, to their great Detriment in the highest Interest, we can possibly have, to seek after the Advancement of, so long as we shall continue in this World.

VI. A Life of Faith may be maintained in a Believer, even under Darkneſs, and the Hiding of God's Face. A *raviſhing* Senſe of Divine Love, does not always attend the Exercise of this Grace. It is ſometimes acted, when the *cheering* Rays of *the Sun of Righteouſneſs*, ſhine not into the Mind, and the *refreshing* Light of extraordinary Comfort and Joy, is wanting. And hereby, the Mind of a Chriſtian is preſerved *tranquil* and *composed*, tho' it hath not that Degree of Pleaſure, which ſprings up in it, from the *affecting* Maniſteſtations of Divine Love. Nor ought this Serenity, which is maintained in the Soul to be cenſured, as *Stupidity*, or a *carnal* Security, for it greatly differs therefrom, whatever ſome may think, who ſeem to have no other Notion of Faith, than what conſiſts in *Raviſhment* and *Extacy*.

VII. This Faith is a Dependence on the Faithfulneſs of God, to all His Promiſes, and Engagements. As God exhorts the Saints,
to

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to *stay* upon Him, and *trust* in His Name, *when they walk in Darknefs and have no Light* : It is reasonable to suppose, that such is the Condition of Believers sometimes, because the Exhortation would be needless, nor could it be put into Practice, if no such Case ever attended them. In that Circumstance to act Faith, evidences the Strength of it, and brings great Glory to God. And when a Christian is enabled to trust in the Lord, and rely on His Fidelity to His gracious Promises ; he walks with Him, and is concerned for His Honour, and yields to Him a becoming Obedience, tho' he enjoys not that sweet Delight, which he does, when he is favoured with *the Light of His Countenance*, and His Love is *shed abroad in his Heart*. And the Foundation of this Trust is *firm* and *stable*, and, consequently, there is no Danger of Shame and Confusion succeeding it. Divine Love is immutable ; Divine Faithfulness is eternal ; and, therefore, this holy Confidence can never be attended with Consequences prejudicial to its Subject. This Dependence is not without some renewed direct Acts of Faith on God and Jesus Christ. Herein it differs from a *carnal* Confidence, and *dangerous* Presumption, which is never attended with *real* Acts of Faith.

VIII. This Life is a Desire and Expectation of better Things than can be enjoyed in this State. By those Things, I do not intend what the World calls valuable, and which
Money

Money may procure ; but Jewels and Treasures far beyond all Comparifon, with the choicest of them, *viz.* Those gracious Vifits, and heavenly Pleasures, which the Saints are sometimes favoured with, in the present State, as an Earnest of the full Enjoyment of God in the World above. *To be with Christ is far better.* What is that which is excelled ? Not the Good of this World, but the Good of Grace, between which and the good Things of this World, no Comparifon can be made. Communion with God, and a View of Christ, in His Glory by Faith, far transcend the Enjoyment of all the Honours, the Riches, and the Delights, which this World hath to bestow on any Mortal, notwithstanding the *vain* Sons of Men court these Things, and when they attain a considerable Share of them, are elated with them, in the *surprizing* Manner they be. *A poor despised* Believer, who walks with God, is far happier than he, who possesses most of Earth, and is a Stranger to Heaven. But the future State of Glory, greatly excels the Good of present Grace, and present Communion with God. And a iLfe of Faith, is an Expectation of that blessed Hope.

C H A P. VII.

Of the Difference between real Conversion and the Semblance of it.

UCH a Change may take Place upon the Mind, and appear in the Conduct of a Person, which he may account *real* Conversion, and may be so esteemed by others, which is far short of it, and hath nothing at all of the Nature of that in it.

First, I propose to consider this Change. *Secondly*, To shew wherein the real Difference lies between Conversion and that Change. This is a Subject of very great Moment and considerable Difficulty. Herein, therefore, it is necessary to proceed with Caution, lest on one hand, the Unconverted should imagine themselves to be in a safe and happy State, and on the other, lest some who really are the Subjects of this good Work, should fall under Discouragement, and be tempted to fear, that they are destitute of true Grace, and have only the Semblance of it. I begin with the former.

First, There is a Change, which is not Conversion, and in this Change, the following Particulars are included.

I. Men

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I. Men may have an Apprehension of the Truth of spiritual Things. This is Light; but not the Light of Grace.

1. A Perception of the Work of the Law, and of *the Truth in it*. This is what is usually called the Fitness and Unfitness of Things, in relation to human Actions. The monstrous Nature of Vice, in numerous Branches of it, may be discerned, and the Propriety and Amiability of virtuous Actions be understood, in a Variety of Instances. This Light is indeed natural to Men, and inseparable from human Nature, though it may be much obscured, by irregular Passions, contracted Prejudices, and the fatal Influence of Temptation, where-with Men are surrounded in every Circumstance. The Increase of this Light by Revelation, which exposes every Kind of Vice, and represents Virtue in all her lovely Charms, is what I here intend. Some by Conversion, seem to mean no more, than a Change of the Manners of dissolute Persons, under the Influence of such Light. But this is a great Remove from it.

2. The Knowledge of the Truth of the Doctrines of the Gospel. They are Principles above Reason, and, therefore, could not be discovered by it; but the Revelation of them, as to their Truth, Reason is capable of understanding, and, consequently, Men may know, that they are true, and as there is a Dependence of one Truth upon another, and an inseparable Connection between all the Branches

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Branches of revealed Truth, the Mind may discern that Dependence and Connection, and the Harmony of its diverse Parts. This is the Work of Reason, not of Grace. Hence, Men destitute of the Light of Divine Grace, may have a clear discerning of the Truth of heavenly Mysteries, who are wholly unacquainted, with the Nature of those mysterious Truths. This cannot be Conversion. Orthodoxy is not to be taken for Faith, nor Soundness of Judgment for Holiness. A Man may understand *all Mysteries*, and preach the Gospel, who is unconverted, and so remain. An awful Truth indeed *!

II. There may be a legal Conviction of Sin in its Guilt. A Man's Sins may be set in Order before him; his Conscience may exhibit many Charges against him, as having acted in a criminal Manner, and sharply remonstrate for his Misbehaviour. The Demerit of Sin may awaken dreadful Fears in his Soul, and occasion severe Self-Reproaches of Folly, Madness, and a wild Fury, which has impetuously pushed him on to gratify extravagant and unlawful Lusts to his endless Ruin. From hence springs,
 1. Sorrow and Distress. A guilty Mind cannot look upon past Offences without some Degree of Concern, lest that Vengeance should overtake it, which is its Due for those criminal Actions. 2. An Enquiry how to escape deserved Punishment. And a Man concludes, that

* Mat. vii. 22, 23. 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

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that an Alteration in his Conduct is necessary to this End, about which he is earnestly solicitous, and, therefore, he resolves upon forsaking a vicious Course of Life, avoiding the Occasions of Sin, and determines with himself to endeavour to practise all known Duties for the future. And by the Influence of this Conviction, he may become a virtuous Person in his Deportment, and much recommend himself to the Esteem of the Sober and Regular, calm his disturbed Conscience, and buoy himself up with Hopes of regaining the Divine Favour, upon an Apprehension, that God will be favourable and propitious to him, if he acts the best Part he is able.

III. He may not only yield an Assent unto, but also take some Pleasure in the Gospel.

1. On Account of its Rationality. As it is a System of Doctrines, that are perfectly consistent and harmonizing.

2. Its general Design. (1.) Salvation from Misery. Self-Love disposes Men to be pleased with, whatever they apprehend, is for their Advantage. And as the Mind is impressed with a Sense of Danger, and is seeking after Security, it is affected with Pleasure by the Report of the Gospel, concerning a Deliverance from eternal Ruin. (2.) The same Principle is excited, by the Revelation of a State of endless Felicity. The Thought of the Enjoyment of Good eternally, gives the Mind a very sensible

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fible Pleasure, though the Nature of that Good is not apprehended, but as the contrary of Torment and Anguish. Under these Considerations the Word may agreeably impress the Mind, and possess it with Joy, without any Perception of its true Nature and Relish of that. This is the Case of *stony Ground* Hearers.

(3.) Sometimes the Reasoning, or the Pathos of the Preacher, entertains the Mind, according to the different Taste of the Hearer: Some, though the *smaller* Part of Mankind, as I take it, are much pleased with just, and nervous Reasoning. With those, the Logic of a Preacher is acceptable; others, who are far the *greater* Part, love to have their Passions moved, if their Judgments are not informed, and they are generally much delighted, when a religious Address has such an Effect upon them, because they flatter themselves, that this is true Edification by the Word, though it is no such Thing. They are entertained with the Preacher's Rhetorick, even when they have no Relish of his Doctrine.

IV. Divine Institutions may be religiously regarded. A Man who hath a serious Turn of Thought, cannot but apprehend, that it is his Duty to worship his Maker, and he sees, that it is certainly requisite to worship God, in that Manner He requires. And as He hath clearly pointed out to us in His Word, that Mode of Worship which is acceptable to Him,

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Him, he finds himself inclined to submit to His Will in this Matter. Accordingly, he takes upon him the Profession of Christianity, and celebrates its sacred Rites. And, thus, in his own Opinion, he commences a true Christian, and often in the Esteem of others also, when he is as far from real Christianity, as he was before this Change. He is not turned from Self to God; but cursed Lust is still the reigning Principle in him, though the Manner of its Rule is altered. Real Grace takes away the Dominion of Lust, Conviction only alters the Form of its Government. Sometimes, it determines a Man to gratify itself in one Way, and sometimes in another, as the Mind is variously affected by different Circumstances.

V. Men may be *conscientious* and *sincere* in all these Things. It would be injurious to many, and contrary to Truth and Fact, to pronounce them *hypocritical* and *insincere*, in their Professions of Sorrow for their Crimes, Resolutions to reform, Desires of escaping Divine Vengeance, and in their Endeavours to obtain that which they understand by Happiness, and in the Way, wherein they think it is to be attained. The Want of a Principle of Grace in the Heart, by which alone a Man can act spiritually, does not necessarily suppose, that whatever such a Person acts of a religious Nature, is performed in an *insincere* and *hypocritical* Manner. The Convic-
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tions of these Persons are *real*, not pretended though not spiritual, their Sorrow on account of their Sins is unfeigned, though it is not of a *godly* Sort, and their Resolutions to amend their Ways are hearty, though not of a holy Nature, their Desires of the Enjoyment of what they esteem Happiness, are *true*, though not arising from Grace, and their Intentions to acquire it may be deliberately formed, and followed with earnest Endeavours. For *Hypocrisy*, in the *gross* Sense of it, stands not opposed to Grace; but to the Truth and Reality of a Man's declared Intentions in his Actions. Though these Persons are not *really* converted, and it may be never will be so, they are, in Truth and Fact, what they profess to be, *viz.* in great Earnest, relating to an Escape from Hell, and the obtaining of eternal Rest and Peace, according to those Apprehensions, which they have thereof. I proceed to shew,

Secondly, Wherein lies the Difference between this Change and real Conversion.

I. A spiritual Conviction of Sin much differs from a mere legal Conviction, in several Respects.

I. As to Sin's Demerit. Legal Conviction is a Perception of the Fact, that Sin exposes a Man to dreadful Punishment. A Person clearly discerns, that it is a certain Truth, that Hell, or eternal Torment and Misery, is the

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the Consequence of a Violation of the Law. And a Consciousness of Guilt awakens in his Soul the most dreadful Fears, and prevents his taking any Rest or Ease, while he is under the Weight of this Conviction. His Language is, What shall I do? Whither shall I flee? By what Means shall I screen myself from that terrible Vengeance which is impending, and possibly may very soon fall upon me? Oh! the Weight of it is insupportable, and it is endless! Oh sad Condition indeed! What will not a Man do in this Case? What will he not offer to avert the threatening Storm? He will not withhold any Thing in the Power of his Hand to give, even though it were *thousands of Rams, or ten thousands of Rivers of Oil*; nay, he would even *give his First-born for his Transgression*, and sacrifice the *Fruit of his Body, for the Sin of his Soul*; he thinks nothing too dear to part with for Safety and Peace, in this distressed Condition: And all this may be, where there is no Grace. Spiritual Conviction proceeds much farther than the Fact, that eternal Death is the Wages of Sin, according to the Law, it is carried on to discern the Justice of this Constitution. Devils and the Spirits of wicked Men know the dreadful Truth, to their inconceivable Horror; but the Righteousness of this Appointment of God, they never will acknowledge. And a Man may have a Taste of Hell, who hath no Meetness at all for Heaven.

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Again, legal Conviction, though it brings a Man to dread suffering Divine Anger, it does not cause him to lament the Loss of Divine Favour. A Man could patiently bear an eternal Separation from God, for Communion with Him he desires not, but His Terrors give him the greatest Uneasiness. We are mistaken, if we think, that Heaven is desirable to us, merely because we tremble at the Thoughts of Hell. In spiritual Conviction the Mind of a poor Sinner is influenced to mourn deeply, under an Apprehension of Sin's exposing him to suffering the Loss of God's gracious and glorious Presence. The Thought of being in a State of Exile and Distance from God affects him sensibly, and his earnest Petition unto God, is: *Cast me not away from thy Presence*, wherein there is a Discovery of true Love to God; but trembling under a Sense of Divine Vengeance, may be without the least Degree of Love to God, or Delight in Divine Favour. The Devils tremble; but they will never love the Object they dread.

2. In spiritual Conviction, the Mind of a poor Sinner, is furnished with the Knowledge of the exceeding Sinfulness of Sin. By Virtue of the Light of Grace, he discerns the Malignity of Sin, as it is contrary to the pure Law of God, and unto the Holiness and Rectitude of His Nature: And from that arises an Abhorrence of Sin, as Sin, which is a real Discovery, that the Mind approves of the
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Law's Precepts, and of the Purity of God. Nothing of this Nature is ever found in a legal Conviction. That indeed will prevail with a Man, to make Opposition to Sin, in its Acts, upon Hopes of escaping Punishment for past Offences; but as those Hopes decline and lessen, his Opposition to Evil abates; and if they are entirely sunk, his Language immediately is: *There is no Hope, I have followed after my Lovers, and after them I will go.* To what Purpose is it for me, to deny myself of Pleasures, which I chuse, since my Ruin is inevitable? I can but perish, let me indulge my Inclinations as far as I am able; why, therefore, should I refuse it, seeing there is no Room left for me to cherish Hopes of escaping the Damnation of Hell? Under the Influence of a spiritual Conviction of Sin, the Mind reasons and acts otherwise; for, as it discerns the Evil, that is in Sin itself, it loaths it, on that Account, and makes Opposition to Lust, from a Sense of its vile Nature, and even though Punishment should be inflicted for past Misconduct, yet the Soul desires to sin no more. Grace influences a Man to say, whether my Sins are forgiven, or not forgiven; whether my Soul is saved, or not saved; as I may be assisted, I will watch, pray, and strive against Sin, which is so abominable and vile in its Nature; yea, though my eternal Damnation was to me as certain, as I clearly discern it would be just, I should be glad to sin no more. Where there is not

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something of this Nature, I say of this Nature, not to speak of its Degree, I know not, that a Man hath any Reason to think, that he is the happy Subject of a spiritual Conviction of Sin. Acquaintance with Sin's Nature, and Abhorrence of it, are Evidences of such a Conviction, and not the Fear of Punishment.

3. There is a very great Difference in the Sorrow of a real Christian, from what is found in the Heart of a Person, who is not truly converted. A Man who is convinced, but not converted, may be overwhelmed with Grief, under a Sense of Guilt, bitter Sighs and deep Groans may proceed from him, on Account of his evil Conduct, because of its Consequences, his Sins may force him to cry, yea roar. He may really and truly lament, that he has acted such a sinful Part, as he is conscious to himself, he has done. So *Judas* repented of betraying of his Master; he was sorry, but not after a godly Sort. It is not the Degree, but the Nature of Sorrow for Sin, which is an Evidence of that Repentance, which the Grace of God produces, and whereof He approves. If a Man's Concern only springs from the Consideration of that Penalty which is due to Sin, he is not the Subject of Repentance unto Life; for Concern on that Account, and in a very great Degree too, may be in a Mind, which loves Sin, and hates Holiness. That Sorrow which arises from a gracious Principle, is of a quite different Nature; it is a Concern
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for having acted contrary to the Will of God, for having abused His Goodness, and for having despised His Authority. In the former, a Person is only under the Influence of Self-Love: A Man is not sorry, that he has dishonoured God; but his Grief is, that he has ruined himself. In the latter, a Person is truly sorry for the Evil he has committed, in distinct Consideration, from the Consequences of such Behaviour. He is a Stranger to Repentance unto Life, who is wholly destitute of this Sorrow, let him howl ever so much under a Sense of Divine Wrath.

4. Legal Conviction, and spiritual Conviction differ in this: The former brings not a Man to a thorough Acquaintance with the Vitiosity of his Nature, the latter does. Under a Consciousness of Guilt, a Person cannot be an absolute Stranger to his corrupt Inclinations, and disorderly Passions; but he does not discern himself, so far as to loath and abhor himself. As he sees not, the exceeding Sinfulness of Sin, so he hath not a View of the dreadful Plague of Sin in his Heart. In spiritual Conviction, a Man's Heart is dissected, and exposed to his View. He discerns, that there is a *total* Want of all Good, and that his Soul is the Subject of all Evil radically. That Concupiscence or Lust, which dwells in him, exerts itself in a most surprizing Variety of Ways.—That his Understanding is darkened: That his Will is obstinate and perverse, disinclined to Holiness, and bent to Sin.—That

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his Affections are light, vain, corrupt, and disposed to unlawful Objects. In a word, that he is in himself *as an unclean Thing*, and that his Heart is a Fountain of Impurity, and always hath so been; that he is Flesh, and only Flesh, the very contrary of that Holiness and Spirituality, which the Law of God requires. And, that, therefore, it is impossible for him ever to recommend himself to the Divine Favour, or regain an Interest in the Divine Approbation, which he lost by Sin. Hence,

5. He dies to the Law, and gives up entirely all Hope of ever being justified by his own Works in the Sight of God. Until a Man is slain by the Law, and becomes dead unto it, as a Covenant, he is not prepared for, nor will be disposed unto a Reception of the Grace of the new Covenant. No Person will renounce his own Righteousness, in the Business of his Acceptation with God, without such an Acquaintance with himself, such a Perception of the Extent of the Law, and of the Equity and Justice of all its Requirements, as a legal Conviction never gives. This is the Reason, why the Mind under that Conviction, to what Height soever it is carried, never embraces, and acquiesces in God's Way of justifying a Sinner. A Person may have a clear Discerning of the Truth of the Doctrine of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ, who is under a legal Conviction; but as that Conviction does not cause him to die to the Law,

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Law, it will never dispose him to seek for Life, and a happy Immortality by the Gospel. Such a one practically contradicts those Notions he hath of evangelical Truths. The Grace of the Spirit only disposes Men to the Embrace of, and an Acquiescency in the Grace of the Gospel. This Dr. *Goodwin*, and Mr. *Halyburton* testify from their own Experience. And, I hope and believe, that some who do not yield an explicit Assent to the Doctrine of Justification, by the Righteousness of Christ alone, yet embrace it, and in the secret solemn Actings of their Souls with God, renounce their own Righteousness, *as filthy Rags*. I think, that he is no Christian who does not. A Man must die to the Law, or else he will never live to God.

II. There is a vast Difference between the Knowledge of the Gospel, which a Temporary hath, and that of a real Christian, as such, I say as such, because he hath that Knowledge, or may have, which the other hath; but that is not all; he hath also another Kind of Knowledge. The former is supposed to have the Knowledge of the Truth of the Gospel, in its diverse Branches. That he may have in a Degree, perhaps, beyond what some Christians have, thro' Hearing, Reading, and Conversation: But he hath not that Knowledge of the Gospel, in any of its Branches, which a Saint of the lowest Fourm hath. For,

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He doth not understand the Nature of evangelical Truths. All he knows about them, is, that they are true Principles, and must necessarily be so, because they are revealed of God, who is Truth, and cannot express a Falsehood. The spiritually enlightened Person, understands the Things themselves, he knows the Things of the Spirit, and those Things which *are freely given to us of God*.

1. He discerns the Wisdom of God, discovered in the Way of Salvation by Jesus Christ. That it is a Method most fit and proper to bring poor Sinners to the Enjoyment of Happiness. Reason in some Measure discerns the Fitness of what is commanded in the Law; but without Divine Illumination, the most Rational cannot discover the Propriety and Fitness of the Way of Salvation by Jesus Christ.

The highest Cultivation of our Reason, prepares us not one Jot for a cordial Reception of the Gospel. Grace alone enables us to view the Wisdom, which is discovered in this admirable Contrivance. Unless we receive the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation from God, to teach us the Nature of heavenly Mysteries, we shall never understand them to our spiritual Advantage and His Glory.

2. A Christian views the wonderful Display of the Divine Perfections, which there is in the Gospel.

That Sovereignty gave Rise to the Design of our Salvation, and is that Foundation
whereon

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whereon it rests. That Infinite Wisdom contrived the Way, wherein Sin is punished to the Full, and yet freely pardoned. That God appears as displeased with Sin, as gracious and merciful to the Persons of Sinners, in the Method He has took to acquit them of Guilt, and free them from Punishment. That His Justice shines with as bright a Lustre, as His Mercy. And that His Holiness is not less conspicuous, than His Love in our Redemption by the Suffering and Death of His Son. That His Law suffers nothing by our Deliverance from its Curse, thro' the Attonement of our Blessed Redeemer.—That in the Way of our Justification the Law is *magnified*, and exalted infinitely beyond what it could have been, by our most perfect Obedience to it, unto Eternity.

On Account of these Things the Saints value the Gospel of Christ. The World is not more mistaken in any Thing, than in this Matter: They imagine, that the Gospel is embraced by the Saints, merely because it is a Scheme of Principles calculated for their Security; but the Truth is, tho' Christians are thankful for that Provision for their Salvation, which they ever ought to be, that is far from being the only Reason, why they approve of the evangelical Scheme; it recommends itself to their greatest Esteem, because of that Glory which arises from it to the Divine Persons, and unto all the Divine Perfections. Real Christians are under the Influence of a more generous Principle, than unregenerate Persons
are

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are acquainted withal, and have far nobler Views, than their Minds are raised up unto, at any Time, whatever their Convictions, Sorrows, Joys, and Endeavours may be. The Glory of God, the Honour of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, yield them the highest Satisfaction and Pleasure. And, therefore, as they clearly discern, that God hath saved them in a Way worthy of Himself, and becoming the Purity, Rectitude, and Holiness of His Nature, they rejoice and are exceeding glad. There is this vast Difference between legal Conviction and spiritual: The former excites a Person to consult his own Safety, and no more; the latter directs the Subject of it unto a Concern for the Glory of God also. Such, whose Minds have never by all their Convictions, been elevated above a Regard to their own Interest, it is no Wonder that they think, that there is no such Ingenuity in the Souls of others. From hence spring all the Calumnies that are cast upon us, for our Attachment to the Doctrines of the Grace of God, by Persons who are indeed in earnest about Religion; but are destitute of spiritual Light, and are under the Influence of legal Convictions only.

3. Christ is discerned in His Suitableness to our Condition, as we are lost and miserable in ourselves. The Merit of His Blood, Death, and Sacrifice is presented to the View of the spiritually convinced Sinner, as the alone procuring Cause of the Remission of Sin, which prevents the Mind sinking into Despondency,
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under a pressing Sense of Guilt. The Merit of His Obedience is discovered to the Mind fully convinced of the Impossibility of ever being justified by its own, for two Reasons, first, because of Sin already committed, which will prove an eternal Bar to Justification by Works; secondly, because no Duty can be performed in that perfect Manner the Law requires. And, this View of the Merit of Christ's Righteousness, ingenerates some Degree of Hope, in the Mind of the spiritually convinced Sinner, of his Acceptation with God his righteous Judge. Again, the Fulness of Grace which is in Christ's Hand, is shewn to the Mind so convinced, and this encourages the Soul to hope for all necessary and seasonable Supplies of Holiness, Wisdom, Strength and Support, in all Times of Affliction, Temptation and Danger, and in order to the Discharge of every Duty, and the Exercise of every Grace, as the Difference of his Circumstances, in this changing State, may render needful. And the Compassion, Care, and Power of Christ, are also discovered to the Soul. This View of a Saviour much endears Him to the poor Sinner, and he is filled with Wonder, that such a Redeemer, so suited to his Condition, should be provided for one in Misery, and wholly so thro' Sin, and be provided too, by the Object against whom all his Sins have been committed, this is Grace which is above all Degree of Comparison astonishing, and the Soul cannot but be amazed at it. Hence,

4. The

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able to God, and His infinitely glorious Perfections. And as he sees, that this is the only Way, wherein the Glory of God can be exalted, this he chuses, delights in, and rejects all others. Legal Conviction of Sin, and the bare Knowledge of the Truths of the Gospel, will never bring a Person to this.

5. These Views of Christ in His Glory, and of the Grace of God, in its Freeness, Riches, Sovereignty, and eternal Duration, produce in the Soul, not only Adoration and Praise, but also spiritual and holy Desires. Earnest Desires of a Conformity to Christ, and of Obedience to the whole Will of God. Grace influences a Man not only to seek for a Deliverance from the Punishment of Sin; but for Salvation from Sin itself. Self-love may put a Person upon the former, but it will never carry him on to the latter. Some speak very contemptibly of good Desires. Mr. *John Wesley* expresses himself thus: “Do not
“others of you rest in Convictions? Or good
“Desires? Alas! what do these avail? A
“Man may be convinced he is sick, yea deeply
“convinced, and yet never recover. He may
“desire Food, yea with earnest Desire, and
“nevertheless perish with Hunger. And thus
“I may be convinced I am a Sinner; but this
“will not justify me before God. And I may
“desire Salvation (perhaps by Fits and Starts
“for many Years) and be lost for ever. —
“Inward Conviction of our Wants is nothing,
“unless those Wants are in Fact supplied.
“Good

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“ Good Desires also are nothing, unless we actually attain what we are stirred up to desire. For still, if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, whatever he desires, he is none of His. O my Brother, beware you stop not short! Beware you never account yourself a Christian; no, not in the lowest Degree, till God hath sent forth the Spirit of Christ into your Heart, and that Spirit bears witness with your Spirit, that you are a Child of God *.” In these few Lines are crowded together many false Suggestions and Errors, concerning the gracious Work of God, upon the Heart of a poor Sinner, which I shall endeavour to refute in some Particulars.

1. He does not distinguish upon Convictions, or observe, as he ought to have done; that Conviction is either legal or spiritual, and that the former may be in unregenerate Persons; and that the latter is proper to the regenerate.

2. I imagine, that he intends such a Conviction as really is spiritual, because he supposes it to produce good Desires.

3. He boldly pronounces, that this Conviction and good Desires which it effects, are nothing, unless this and the other Things follow, except what is desired, is actually attained. It has been thought, that Desires of Grace, are Grace; that is to say, that they spring from a gracious Principle, implanted in the Heart by the Spirit of God, and this is an eternal Truth. A Desire of Holiness, is a holy Act, and cannot spring

* Farther Appeal, Part 2. p. 57.

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spring up in the Mind, as it is corrupt; no holy Acts arise from the Flesh. If a Desire to sin is a sinful Act, then a Desire to be holy is an Act of Holiness. Again, Desire supposes an Approbation of what is desired; for a Person desires not that which he does not approve of. In a Desire of Holiness, therefore, is contained an Approbation of the Law of God, unto which a carnal Mind will never become subject, and, consequently, that Person in whom holy Desires arise, is spiritual, holy, and born again. Moreover, what God produces in Men by His gracious Influences upon them must be holy; He is the Author of holy Desires, for He works in us *to will*, as well as *to do*, and both *of His good Pleasure*. Besides, that which God approves of is certainly holy; He approves of a holy Desire, and will hear it. Herein consists the very Essence of Prayer. Our Desires are the Language of our Souls, and Desires of Holiness God will graciously attend unto and fulfil: Blessed be His Name for that abundant Evidence, which He hath given us of this Matter, in many sweet and precious Promises. Thought is a lower Act than Desire; and even that, when it is spiritual and holy, is graciously regarded by God: He hath *a Book of Remembrance written before Him, for them who think on His Name*. And He hears the Desire of the Humble, their Sighs and Groans, arising from a Sense of their Sinfulness, and Imperfections in Duty, are acceptable to Him.

4. He falsely supposes, that a Man may be convinced of his Misery, and desire Salvation (by Fits and Starts for many Years) and yet be lost for ever. If he designs a spiritual Conviction of our Misery, it is most false. Nothing more contrary to the tender Love and Care of Christ towards poor sensible Sinners can be asserted, than this is. What! may a Man see his Misery, and desire Salvation by Jesus Christ, and yet be lost for ever? What is a Desire of Salvation by Christ, but a poor Sinner's Application to Him to be saved by Him? Will He then refuse to save him? Or are not His Merit, and Power, and Fulness, equal to His Compassion? Would He save him, but cannot? If neither of these Things is true; but true they are not, how comes it to pass, that this Person who applies to Christ for Salvation, under a Sense of his Sin and Misery, is yet lost for ever? Does Mr. *Wesley* think to ward off the Force of scriptural Arguments, which are many for the Proof of the comfortable Doctrine, of Christ's tender Love to, and constant Care of such who come to Him, by his Parenthesis, wherein he mentions desiring Salvation by Fits and Starts for many Years? If he does, he is deceived. It is both naturally and morally impossible, that any Christian should exercise Grace without any Interruption. It is naturally impossible, because he sometimes is in a sound Sleep. It is morally impossible, because not only of the Opposition of the Flesh; but, also because in this State he is called to transact

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transact such Affairs, as will not admit of an uninterrupted Exercise of Grace. I much question, *whether Mr. Wesley himself*, can in an uninterrupted Manner, think of spiritual Things, and earnestly desire them, while he is intently employed, in demonstrating one of *Euclid's* Problems, or Theorems, as perfect a Master, as he is willing the World should think he is, of Geometry. This I take to be one Instance of that Art and Cunning, which ought never to be used in writing on religious Subjects: More such Instances are to be met with in this Author. However, it nothing helps him. Grace is an habitual Disposition to holy Acts; but in none is it always in actual Exercise. The less it is interrupted in its Actings, the better; and Christians ought to be careful about the Exercise of it.

Our Saviour has taught us Doctrine as opposite to this, as Light is to Darknesh. According to Him, Happiness will attend the Man who hath holy Desires: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.* According to Mr. *Wesley*, a Man may desire, yea, earnestly desire spiritual Food, or the *sincere Milk of the Word*, and yet perish with Hunger. Is this talking like a Christian Minister, whose Business it is to encourage poor Sinners, who are hungering and thirsting after Christ, Holiness, and Salvation, to tell them, that they may yet perish with Hunger? No, surely. But why may they perish? Will Christ refuse to give them Bread,

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when He has by His Holy Spirit excited them to desire, yea earnestly to desire it at His Hand? What they so earnestly desire, they must be supposed willing to receive, and, therefore, their perishing for Want cannot be owing unto an Unwillingness to receive Food. This is giving a sad Account of a tender Saviour; but, blessed be God, it is as false as any Thing that can be spoken by Man. In whomsoever a Will is wrought to receive Grace, Life, and eternal Blessedness, to him those Favours shall certainly be granted; for with that gracious View was that Desire and Will produced in him.

5. Mr. *Wesley* advises a Person, not to account himself a Christian, no, not in the lowest Degree, unless the Spirit of God bears witness with his Spirit, that he is a Child of God. That is to say, until he enjoys an Assurance of an Interest in the Love of God, is an Heir of Him, and a Joint-Heir with Christ. What if a Man hath such an Assurance? May he certainly conclude upon his everlasting Enjoyment of God, of whom he is assured he is an Heir? No, by no means, according to Mr. *Wesley's* Opinion, for Grace in his Heart may become *extinct*, as he thinks; and, therefore, this Assurance cannot be a Persuasion of a Certainty of being happy hereafter; because that is not a Thing certain in itself, at least, with respect to some, who really have true Grace. For if a Person may lose his Meetness for Heaven, how well so-
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ever he may be satisfied, that he is at present the Subject of that Meekness, it is impossible, that he should enjoy an undoubted Hope of coming there. Of Assurance I have before treated, and declared my Sentiments concerning that great Privilege, to which I shall not add any Thing here. I only beg Leave to observe, that it is not acting the Part of a *Workman, who needeth not to be ashamed*, in giving Advice to Christians not to rest satisfied with that Measure of Grace, they have already received, to require them to conclude they have none at all, because it is not carried to that Height, which all ought to desire it may be brought in their Souls, for the Glory of God, and their greater Consolation. Is it proper to endeavour to persuade a Man, that he is not a Babe in Christ, because he is not a Father? Is it any Wisdom to labour to persuade a Person, that he is dead in Trespases and Sins, merely because he is not yet arrived to that Degree of spiritual Strength, which it is desirable he may? Is it proper to deny such Acts as certainly spring from a gracious Principle in a Person, to be of a holy spiritual Nature, because some farther Acts of the same Principle are yet wanting in him? Is this the Way to strengthen and improve Grace in the Mind? On the contrary, is it not the Way to promote Unbelief? It certainly is, and hath no other Tendency than to bring a Person of a lower Measure of Grace, to conclude he has none; which is not a likely Means of

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increasing it. The *best* have need of Exhortation to seek after the Increase of Grace in their Souls; but that is not a sufficient Reason for calling upon any, in whom true Grace is, though in a low Degree, to conclude upon his being wholly destitute of it. That Person, who knows no better Method of stirring up Christians to their Duty than this is, ought to stay till he is better qualified for a Service of this Kind, before he presumes to engage in it. But I return to the Work before me.

III. There is a great Difference in the Obedience of a Person who is the Subject of a legal Conviction, and that of a spiritual Person. This Difference is not in the external Matter of it; for that, I grant, may be the same in both, as to Abstinence from Sin, and the Practice of Duty. The one may be as outwardly regular, and religious as the other. But still there is a vast Difference in the Obedience of these Persons. The Person under a legal Conviction, acts out of Fear in what he does. He would not be what he is, was it not through Terror of Conscience, which drives him to it. He obeys God as a Man obeys a Tyrant, under whose Power he is. Such Obedience God abhors. The gracious Soul attends to Duty from a Principle of Love to it, and Delight in it. Again, the Man who acts under the Influence of a legal Conviction, proposes to make God a Debtor

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Debtor to him by his Obedience; and all the Satisfaction he takes in what he does, arises from the Consideration of the Reward he expects for his Care, Diligence, and Denial of his Lusts. His Aim is his Wages, and serving of himself, not God. This is also highly displeasing unto God. Whereas, a spiritual Person aims at God's Glory, and humbly owns, that his Service is so far from deserving a Reward from God, that it justly exposes his Person to Condemnation, according to the Law, because of those Blemishes and Imperfections, that are found even in the *purest* Part of it. Again, a Person acting under the Influence of legal Conviction, is content with the Performance of Duty, but a gracious Soul aims at Spirituality and Communion with God therein.

I shall conclude this Subject with some Observations.

1. Sometimes Persons who give the best Evidence of their being Subjects of true Grace, are in great Concern, through Fears and Jealousies, that they are not. Because they are not that in Degree, which the gracious Principle in them causes them to long to be, they are fearful, that they are not that which in Fact they be, *viz.* Lovers of God, of Christ, and of Holiness, and Haters of Sin, as Sin.

On the other hand, 2. It is often seen, that some, who have no Reason to conclude, that they are in a happy State, have no Scruple at all of the Goodness of their State, and the Safety

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of their Condition. They are indeed other Sort of Men than they once were, they have passed under a Change, and they think all is well. But they know not themselves, nor Sin, nor God, nor *Jesus Christ*, nor wherein the real Happiness of a poor Sinner consists, and are quite easy and content without it. They cry to themselves Peace, though they know not the Way to eternal Rest and Peace. They think, that they are in the Way to Heaven, but in Fact they are in the Road to Hell and everlasting Misery. There is another Way which leads to Death, besides that of indulging our sensual Lusts, and neglecting the Duties of Religion, *viz.* a Proposal to obtain Life by our own Works, in Opposition to God's Way of saving poor Sinners, alone by the Blood, Righteousness, and Grace of His Son. He, who thinks to acquire a Right to Heaven by his own Works, and attends to Duty upon that Principle, will in the Issue meet with a *sad* Disappointment.

3. Not all that Knowledge which a Christian hath of Christ, and heavenly Things, is of a spiritual Nature. His Discernment of the Truth of Evangelical Mysteries, may be clear and very extensive, and yet his spiritual Acquaintance with them may be but small. He may be very conversant about them, as to their Truth, Connection, and the Harmony of the several Branches of the Gospel, and yet be but very little in the Exercise of Grace ~~upon~~ them. Let us, therefore, never form
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an Opinion either of the Truth, or of the Degree of our Grace, from our Perception of the Evidence of the Truth of Gospel Doctrines. For, as a Man may perceive, that Evidence, who has no Grace at all: So a Christian may much increase in his Acquaintance with the Truth of evangelical Principles, and be able to speak of them, with great Readiness, Pertinence, and Accuracy, and notwithstanding that, woefully decline in a gracious, savoury, and spiritual Knowledge of the Things themselves. It is not always that our Growth in Grace is equal to our Improvement in Light of this Kind. And I must needs say, that it would be better for most of us more carefully to attend unto this Consideration, than perhaps we do. A Revival in the vital and experimental Part of Religion will be expected, in vain, under our sorrowful Decays, without it.

4. Hence we see, what Care and Caution, as well as Faithfulness are required in a Christian Minister. Great Prudence, and a clear Discerning of the Difference between real Grace in its Nature, and the genuine Actings of it, and a legal Conviction, and of its Effects are necessary, in speaking to their Hearers on the important Subject of the Conversion of a Sinner. Unskilfulness in treating on this Point, may be attended with sad Consequences, both to Saints and Sinners. The former may be discouraged, or weakened in their Faith; and the latter, may be tempted

tempted to think, that they are in Safety. If, on one hand, we are not careful, that our Account of Conversion exceeds not the Nature of true Grace, in those Effects, which it produces: And if, on the other, we see not to it, that our Account of that Work, comes up to its real Nature, and genuine Fruits. And, therefore, how awful, and how difficult a Labour is that of the Ministry! What Compass of spiritual Knowledge? What Acquaintance with the Workings of the Minds of Men under Conviction and Temptations? What a Discernment of true Grace in its Nature, Actings, and Fruits, are necessary unto the Discharge of this Service, as well as an Understanding of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ? What Assiduity in Study, not only of the holy Word of God; but also what careful Observation of our own Hearts, in Times of Trouble, Temptation, as well as in Seasons of Consolation and Joy is requisite? A well accomplished Christian Preacher, in my Opinion, is the noblest and highest Character, a poor sinful Mortal can bear. But unto this, what Labour, what Skill, what Tenderneſs, what Faithfulness are absolutely necessary? And, therefore, once more, I observe,

5. It certainly behoves Christians to give all possible Assistance and Encouragement to Ministers in their Work, which in itself is so very difficult, and which in a proper Discharge of it, is of such Importance to their Advantage

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tage, in their best Interest. This is one Duty among many others, too much neglected in these declining Times. How many Professors are unconcerned, what Difficulties and Discouragements their Ministers labour under ? They live in Plenty, and are rising in their Circumstances, that is enough for them. They cannot but know, if they will allow themselves to think, that their Ministers find great Difficulty to provide Things honest in the Sight of Men, and yet they are so far from affording them a little Degree of Sympathy under this Circumstance, that they insult them, however modestly they demean themselves. I think, that Man is blind, who discerns not some visible Tokens of Christ's Displeasure, with this Sort of Behaviour towards his Ministers. But I forbear to add more on so unpleasing a Subject.

CHAP.

C H A P. VIII.

Of a Growth in Grace.

Y Grace I do not intend, a speculative Knowledge of the Doctrines of Christianity : An Acquaintance with the Truth, Connection and Harmony of Christian Principles is not Grace, sufficiently appears, I think, from what has been before observed.

Nor are Gifts, Grace, or an Ability to explain, defend, and inculcate those Doctrines, though it be in ever so serviceable a Manner : A Man may be furnished with eminent Gifts, and greatly improve them by Reading, Meditation, and a diligent Exercise of those Talents, and at the same Time *dwindle* in his Graces. And he certainly will so do, if he aims not at the Exercise of his Graces, in the Exercise of his Gifts. When it is thus, with any who are employed in *publick Work*, however accurate their Performances may be, a spiritual Savour will always be found wanting in them. It is as necessary for a Minister to look well to his Graces, as to his Gifts ; if he desires and designs an Improvement in both. I fear, that with many, there is great Neglect in this Matter, if the *best* are not *culpable* of too much Negligence herein.

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As the Apostle *Paul* was very eminent in Grace and Holiness, it was his earnest Desire, that Churches and particular Persons to whom he directed his *Epistles*, might increase and greatly flourish therein. And, in my Opinion, we may easily learn, wherein that Growth of Grace consists, by attending unto his solemn Prayers to God, in Behalf of those to whom he writes, and by consulting the Account which he gives us of his own gracious Experience, relating unto this momentous Subject.

I. Let us attend unto the Consideration of what was the Matter of his Request unto God for others. Hereby our Views will be much enlarged on this noble Subject, and, if there is any Thing of Spirituality in our Minds, we shall, under the Blessing of God, be stirred up to make his Petitions for others, our Requests unto God for ourselves.

He prays for the Enlargement of the Saints Knowledge of heavenly Mysteries. This Favour, he earnestly desires might be vouchsafed, unto the *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, and to the *Colossians*. It is evident, that he intends the most *sublime* and *deep* Mysteries of the Gospel. Doctrines which many through Ignorance, Pride, or it may be as to some a Contempt of them, would have them buried in eternal Silence and Oblivion, or if not so, will *scarcely* allow of an *explicit* Mention of them in *Publick*; because, as they say, they

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they are of so *abstruse*, *difficult*, and *perplexed* a Nature, that they are above the Reach of *vulgar* and *ordinary* Capacities, and, therefore, not likely to be of any great Use to the Interest of Holiness and practical Religion, which it must be the real and principal Design of the Christian Revelation to promote. And the dreadful Effects of this *blasphemous* Pretence against God and His sacred Truths, under which the Church at this Time groans, and in many Places withers and declines, in Savour, Spirituality, and experimental Religion, are far more than I am capable of enumerating. The *meanest* Christian, is able to conceive of the *sublimest* Principles that are peculiar to the Gospel, in that Manner, the *Apostle* desired his dear Saints, to whom his *Epistles* were inscribed, might understand them. That is to say, in a spiritual Manner. Strong Reason is not necessary to this, though strong Grace is needful to a fixed and steady Persuasion of them, after a spiritual Sort. The Knowledge of *technical* Terms, the Use of which is become necessary, in treating on those Subjects, through *learned* Men's *subtle* and *quaint* Distinctions upon them, not out of Love to Truth, but with a Desire to *curtail*, *corrupt*, or *entirely sink it*, is not required to a spiritual Understanding of them. *Philosophy* and *Logic* are useless Things in this Matter. Neither are they of that Advantage, even when *soberly* used, in the handling of evangelical Doctrines, as some suggest they are.

are. They cannot contribute any Thing towards the Discovery of those Truths. The Reason is plain, they are no other than, an *artificial* Ordering of our Conceptions, concerning some natural Truths, and inferring others, from them, which naturally follow from thence. And what can that do towards the Discovery of supernatural Truths, or of the Nature of those Truths? Nothing at all. Persons, who in Comparison with others, may be accounted *Babes*, in the Knowledge of earthly Things, may have a clear, and distinct Understanding of the Nature of the Mysteries of Christianity, though they cannot discourse of them in that *artificial* Way, which some with great Readiness may do, who are as ignorant of the Things themselves, whereof they speak, as a *Stock*, or a *Stone*. God knows, that human Science, is a poor Foundation for human Pride. *Philosophy*, even in her own Sphere, is not so knowing, in many Instances, as her Votaries represent her. She often puts us off, with ingenious Conjectures only, though she *vaunts*, as if she gave us the most undeniable Demonstration, and we are so foolish, as to grow up into Confidence, without Proof. 'Tis enough for her to act this Part in natural Things, let us never permit her to impose upon us in Spirituals also.

This Observation dropt from me before I was well aware; but since it is fallen from my Pen, I shall not retract it, for I know it is Truth, however mortifying it is to our boast-
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ed intellectual Powers, which I could give Proof of in various Instances.

1. They are common Christians, for whose Improvement in the Knowledge of the Mysteries of Divine Grace the Apostle prays, not such whose Talents were above the *ordinary* Degree. The Evidence afforded in Favour of their Truth, is obvious in itself, and not beyond the Reach of a *common* Understanding; though it is much obscured by the *studied* Distinctions, *philosophical* Objections, and *critical* Wrestings of many *learned* Men. And as to the Nature of those *mysterious* Doctrines, Reason merely can never understand it. This I think may be received, as a certain Rule in Divinity, *viz.* That those Principles, which as to their Truth are above the Discovery of Reason, the natural Understanding of Men, how much soever it is improved, can never attain unto an Acquaintance with their true Nature. That is a supernatural Gift. And the *meanest* Capacity is as susceptible of this heavenly Grace, as the *most capacious* Mind. And, therefore, the profoundest Doctrines of Christianity may be profitably understood by Persons of very small Discernment, and Abilities in other Things, as they are proposed to the Faith of the Saints in the Holy Scripture, for their Encouragement and Consolation. This holds true even with respect to the Doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, Predestination, Satisfaction, and efficacious Grace. Though, they
cannot

cannot dispute about Essence and Person, Priority or Posteriority, nor concerning Subsistence in itself, or in another, nor of the Effectualness of the Divine Decrees, in Consistence with human Liberty, nor of the Foundation, on which God proceeded in the Business of Satisfaction, nor of the certain Efficacy of Divine Grace in the Conversion of a poor Sinner, in an Agreement, with the free Agency of the Subject of that effectual Influence: I say, tho' they cannot debate those Points with *subtle* Objectors, they are capable of understanding these precious Truths, in such Sort, as they are revealed of God, with a gracious View, to excite in their Minds a holy Adoration of Himself, and of His Designs in their Favour, and to engage them to exert Acts of Faith, Hope, and Joy in a glorious Redeemer, wherein alone consists, that Knowledge, which will stand our Souls in Stead, in a Time of Trial, Temptation, and more especially, at the awful Hour of Death.

1. The Apostle intreats, that the Knowledge of the *Ephesians* might be increased in the great Things of God, *viz.*

His Relation unto Christ, as Mediator, and unto His People in and through Him, this is implied in that Character, under which he speaks of God, in his solemn Address to Him: *The God of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And, that they might clearly view Him, as the Fountain and Author of Blessedness and Glory, signified by the other Branch of His Cha-
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rafter, *the Father of Glory*. He communicates Grace, which is a Meetness for future Glory; it is the first Fruits of it, and is of a glorious Nature, and is called Glory. An Advance in Grace, is a Transformation of the Mind into the heavenly Image, *from Glory to Glory*. The Titles he gives to the Blessed Spirit are very instructive, and suited unto the Matter of his following Petitions: *The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation*. He perfectly knows all the *deep Things of God*, wherein His Wisdom is in the fullest Manner discovered, and is able to make us know them to our Peace, Consolation, and spiritual Joy. Now follow his Requests unto God for them, that their Minds might be furnished with larger Degrees of heavenly Light: *The Eyes of your Understanding being enlightened*, whereby they would clearly discern, what was *the Hope of their Calling*. Vocation intends that holy Calling, which is the Fruit of God's *Purpose and Grace, given us in Christ before the World began*. The Hope of it, may respect, either the Object and Foundation of the Saints spiritual Expectations, or the Good which Grace in the Soul is a Hope of enjoying hereafter, which is expressed by *Riches of Glory*, attributed to the heavenly Inheritance. Somewhat of that Glory, we receive in this State; but the Riches, Plenitude, and Perfection of it, are reserved for our Enjoyment in the future State. Again, he desires that they might know, what Grace and Power
were

were displayed, and exerted in that good Work wrought in them, as the only Preparative for a Participation of that glorious State. His Desire was, that they might have a more enlarged Apprehension of the Cause of their Vivification, when they were in a State of Death in Sin. Which Cause is the infinite Power of God. *The Greatness of His Power, yea, the exceeding Greatness of His Power, and the Working of His mighty Power,* the same as He exerted in *raising Christ from the Dead.* Some learned Men, in order to evade the Force of an Argument taken from hence, in Confirmation of the Doctrine of the efficacious Grace of God, in the Conversion of a poor Sinner, observe, that it was the Manner of the *Eastern* Writers to use strong Language and bold Figures; and, that, therefore, some Abatement of the Force of their Expressions, may be made consistently enough, with the true Intention of those Authors. When *Criticism* fails, this *Shift* is to serve their Turn. And, no question, but they compliment themselves very highly, on Account of this invented *Evasion*, by the Help of which, they may sink the *pompous* Language of a Divine Writer, to as low a Sense, as they would have had him expressed, if they had dictated to him on those Subjects. We see, that other People, besides the *Papists*, know how to make the Scriptures, *a Nose of Wax.* What, if some others should act the same Part? And why may they not, on what is said relating to the Subject

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of future Blessedness in this Place, and elsewhere; and maintain, that, though *lofty* and *grand* Expressions are used on that Subject, yet no such *grand* and *noble* Ideas are intended to be conveyed, by those *exalted* Modes of Speech, as we imagine; and insist upon it, that the future State of the Saints, is not such in *Grandeur*, *Majesty*, *Bliss*, and *Glory*, as those rising Expressions in Loftiness, naturally lead us to conclude upon? What must we say to them? Surely this, except we will content ourselves with *low* Apprehensions of that blessed State, and lay aside our Hopes of being hereafter, so happy as we desire to be, that they are *bold Corrupters* of the Word of God, though they boast of *superior* Learning, and Ingenuity, in interpreting it. Without the Leave of these Men, we shall still believe, that when we read of God's Inheritance in the Saints, and of Glory, and of God's Glory, and of the Riches of that Divine Glory, in Relation to that Inheritance, such Blessedness is designed, as far transcends our present, most exalted Ideas of it. And when we read of God's Power, of the Greatness of His Power, of the exceeding Greatness of His Power, and of the Working of His mighty Power, in effecting a saving Change in our Souls, we shall still retain a Persuasion, whether these Men will allow us or no, of two Things: (1.) That this Change requires the Exertion of the infinite Power of God to produce it. (2.) That almighty Power is certainly

tainly effectual in its Influence on the Hearts of Sinners, and really converts them from Sin to God. And since the Knowledge of this, and the Increase of it, among other Things, were the Matter of the *Apostle's* Request to God for the *Ephesians*, we are firmly persuaded, that the Belief of it, is a *necessary* Article of Faith, and that it is what may be apprehended in a very useful Manner, by *common* Christians, and that a Growth in Grace, necessarily supposes an increasing Acquaintance with this, and the other Things above-mentioned: Let some call them speculative Points of Doctrine, which have little or no Influence upon Practice. It is true, indeed, they have no Influence at all, upon the Minds and the Behaviour of many; but that is because they are Strangers to Christianity, both in its Principles, and that holy Conversation, which it recommends. Farther, the *Apostle* prays, that God, *according to the Riches of His Glory*, or of His Grace, which is His Glory, and he designs, and desires, that they might so account it, would strengthen them, *with Might by His Spirit in their inner Man*. The *inner Man* only is the Subject of a Divine Influence, and capable of receiving spiritual Strength; the *Flesh*, or *old Man*, is not so; and it betrays great Ignorance, both of Grace and of the *Flesh* too, to imagine, that it can. Increase in Grace consists much in the Communication of an additional Vigour to our spiritual Part, whereby it exerts itself in a

lively Manner. Farther, he beseeches God, that *Christ might dwell in their Hearts by Faith, i. e.* that they might be much conversant with Him in a Way of believing, or in acting Faith on Him, in His Person, Offices, Work and Benefits, in the Merit of His Obedience, and the Merit of His Sacrifice, and in the Fulness of His Grace, and the Prevalence of His Intercession, that *being rooted and grounded in Love*, in a Sense of a dear Saviour's Love to them, in their Love to Him, and to one another, they might be equal to any of the Saints, in a Perception of the Love of Christ, or in an Acquaintance with that Love, in its Dimensions, the *Breadth, Length, Depth, and Height* of it, know and be persuaded of it, as an Affection, which surpasses our most extensive Ideas, and that they might *be filled with all the Fulness of God*. Upon the whole, I think two Things may fairly be inferred, from what is expressed by the *Apostle* in a Way of Petition; *First*, That Grace is a spiritual Understanding of spiritual Things, or heavenly Mysteries. *Secondly*, That the Increase of Grace necessarily supposes, the Advancement of that Knowledge.

And the *Apostle* prayed, that the *Philippians* might *abound in Love* more and more, *in Knowledge*, and in *all Judgment*. Christian Love is not a blind Affection or Passion, it is a spiritually discerning Grace. And those Things, that are the Objects on which the Grace of Love is acted, are discerned, in some Measure, in
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their Nature, in order to a spiritual Delight in them. Hence it follows, that where there is not a spiritual Understanding of spiritual Things, there is no spiritual Pleasure in them; and also, that we are deceived, if we think that we increase in Love to heavenly Objects, without a growing Acquaintance with their Excellency and Glory. An Advancement in Divine Love, cannot be without an Improvement in heavenly Knowledge. The more a Christian knows of the Importance and Glory of evangelical Truths, the more will his Heart be attracted after them, and the infinitely glorious Objects, to which they relate, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, therefore, it is a Folly greatly to be lamented, that Men propose, to raise and maintain in the Minds of those to whom they minister, a holy Affection, without endeavouring to furnish them with an Understanding of the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion. For no Object is loved, farther than it is apprehended and known. Love to God springs from the Knowledge of Him, in the Designs and Actings of His Grace, and the Benefits accruing to our Souls from thence.

In the Doctrines of Christianity, two Things are to be observed. 1. Their Truth. 2. Their Nature. A Man may discern the former, who hath no Perception of the latter. In the latter, an Apprehension of the former is necessarily included; for the Nature of evangelical Truths cannot be known, without the

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Mind hath received a Conviction of their Verity; and, consequently, the Flourishing of the Grace of Love, supposes a growing Acquaintance, both with the Truth and Nature of these Doctrines. But it may be needful to observe, by way of Caution, that Love only arises from a spiritual Perception of the Nature of those sublime Truths, a bare Conviction of their Truth, however full it is, by an attentive Consideration of the clear Evidences given in Favour thereof, will never beget any Delight in the Things themselves, for they are still unknown. Let none, therefore, content themselves, with a Discernment and Persuasion of their Truth, nor imagine, that they are Christians, because they have a Knowledge of the Truth of those Principles; for Men may eternally perish under the just Condemnation of the Law, who yield the firmest Assent unto the Truth of the Gospel. Real Grace is a spiritual Understanding of spiritual Things, and the Soul's Adherence unto them and holy Delight in them, as they are glorious, and exalt the Glory of God, in His Persons and infinite Perfections.

The *Colossians* were also interested in the Prayers of the *Apostle*; and for them he intreated of God, an Enlargement of their heavenly Knowledge, or an increasing Acquaintance with the Will of God, *i. e.* His Counsels and Purposes of Grace, concerning their Salvation, in its several Parts, and in the infinitely wise Methods wherein it is accomplished, which

which Contrivance is the *fullest, brightest,* and *most astonishing* Display of the Wisdom of God. His Wisdom shines in all His Works; but in the Affair of our Redemption by Christ, there is such an Exercise of Mercy and Grace towards Sinners, and such a Manifestation of Divine Wrath and Indignation against Sin, as will for ever fill the Minds of Angels and Saints with Astonishment and Delight. In this Business the greatest Evil is over-ruled by sovereign Love, for bringing into View and everlasting Enjoyment, the highest Good, *viz.* the Treasures of God's Kindness, Grace and Mercy, which, otherwise, had lain eternally hid and concealed from both Angels and Saints. And it is especially to be observed, that it is a spiritual Understanding of that, so *deep* and *sublime* a Mystery, that the *Apostle* intends, and that is the Matter of his Request to God on their Behalf. That it is an Acquaintance, with the real and true Nature of the Doctrines of Christianity, not merely a Perception of their Truth, which never produces those Effects, that he ardently wished might plentifully be found with them. Farther, that he designs an Increase in the Knowledge of the profound Truths of the Christian Revelation, will not, I think, admit of the least Scruple, if we take into Consideration, that his Desire was, that they might be replenished, with the Knowledge of *the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*, where is clearly proposed to their serious Consideration, and, consequently
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to their Faith, what many nominal Christians pretend, can be no Article of the Belief of *common* and *ordinary* Saints, *viz.* the Doctrine of the Trinity, or of the real Distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, their Equality and their Union. And, that glorious Mystery which these Three, alike eternal, wise, powerful and good, were concerned in the Contrivance of, *viz.* the Salvation of Sinners by Jesus Christ. And it is worthy of Notice, that if there is any Thing in that Scheme, which deserves the Name of Mystery, above other Parts of it; the *Apostle* desired, that they might receive the largest and richest Assurance of its Truth, and that they might profess and own it as an Article of their Creed. Nor did the inspired Writer, under the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, pray for what is in its Nature impossible. True it is, let *learned* Men take it as they please, *common* Christians are full as capable of spiritually understanding the great Things of God, as any of those, who have the *best* Title to that Character.

And as Christ is the Sum and Substance of evangelical Truths, or as all those Truths meet in Him, their proper Center, a Growth in heavenly Knowledge is an Increase of our Acquaintance with Him, in the Constitution of His Person, His Offices, Work, Fulness and Benefits. Hence, the *Apostle* exhorts us to *walk in Him, as we have received Him*, which intends the Renewal of Acts of Faith upon Him, as He of God, is made unto us *Wisdom, Righteousness,*

teousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. Nor is there any Increase in Grace and Holiness, without renewed Acts of Faith on Him, for it is only by believing Views of His Glory, that we are changed into the heavenly Image, from Glory to Glory.

II. If we attend unto the Consideration of the *Apostle's* gracious Experience, as he relates it, in Respect to this Point, we shall see the Truth of what is observed above, fully exemplified in him. He declares, that he lived a Life of Faith on Christ in His Love, the Acts of His Love, its Nature, and the precious Effects of it. And by a Discernment of His Excellency, Beauty, and Glory, ardent Love to Him, Delight in Him, and earnest Desires of a clearer Knowledge of Him, and of greater Conformity unto Him, were produced in his Soul.

I. He set no Value on all his Accomplishments and Excellencies, which he had esteemed *Gain*. The Discovery he received of the Glory of Christ, *the Sun of Righteousness*, obscured and hid all the Shine of his own *glittering* Righteousness, which before was exceedingly pleasing to him, and in the Light whereof he had walked with great Delight. He now saw that he had been involved in Darkness, that caused him to be content in encompassing himself about with *Sparks*, and walking in the *Light* of his own *Fire*, and that it was rich Grace undeceived him, and prevented his lying down in *eternal Sorrow*, which is the Case of all

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all those, who are left to this Dependence on their own Services, however exact and shining they may be in their Apprehension, for they are no other than an *Ignis fatuus*, which will lead Men into everlasting Perdition.

2. He accounted all Things, *i. e. his extraordinary* Gifts, and their Exercise for the Benefit of the Church, his Grace, and the Actings of it, in all Duties, he discharged, both as a Christian, and a Minister; but *Loss* for the *Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ*. The Phrase is very observable, he doth not say for Christ, but for the Knowledge of Christ. Such a Value he put upon an Acquaintance with Him, in His Glory, in the Glory of His Person, Righteousness and Grace, as caused him to look upon all other Things, as nothing comparatively. And he freely, chearfully suffered the Loss of them all, and esteemed them but *Dung*, Dog's Meat (as the *Greek* Word signifies) for Christ.

3. In this low Estimate of all these Excellencies, he had Respect to the Righteousness of Christ, for Justification before God; and, therefore, he casts no Slight or Contempt on Grace and the Fruits of it in itself, but rejects it in the Business of his Acceptation with God, for the Righteousness of Christ, which is infinitely glorious and valuable, and hath infinite Merit in it, arising from the infinite Dignity of His Person, who is as *truly* God, as He is *really* Man.

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4. He expresses an intense Desire to know Him, that is to say, to grow in the Knowledge of His Person, who is incomparably excellent and beautiful, and admits of no Compare with the *loveliest* among Angels, or Saints. His Glory is like that of the Sun, theirs but like that of the Planets, which is borrowed, and inexpressibly inferior to that of those lucid Bodies from which they derive it all. Every Excellency centers in Him, and, therefore, He deservedly is the Object of the Love, Joy, Adoration and Delight of the happy Saints and Angels, who encircle His Throne in Heaven. He is all Beauty without Blemish, all radiant Glory, without so much, as the *least* Shade, or a *feeble* Ray. As God, He is possessed of all infinite Perfections: As Man, He is the Subject of Purity untainted, and adorned with all the shining Graces of the Holy Spirit, in their Plenitude and Perfection: As God and Man united, He is the most glorious Effect of the immense Wisdom of God, which Constitution of His Person was designed to answer Ends respecting God and the Church, which could not in any other Way be effected.

Ends most interesting to the Glory of all the Divine Perfections, and unto our Peace, Joy, and everlasting Felicity. And, consequently, a spiritual View of His Person, will kindle in our Hearts fervent Love to Him, beget a holy Delight in Him, encourage us to exercise a holy Trust in Him, and influence us to make the adoring Song of the blessed Angels, who

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who were the joyful Messengers of His Nativity, our own, and with pleasing Accents, cause us to pronounce their Language on that most happy Occasion: *Glory to God in the highest, on Earth Peace, and Good-will towards Men.* If we attentively consider the Grace, Mercy, Kindness, and Wisdom discovered in the Constitution of His Person, we shall, be at a Loss, to determine, which most calls for our Wonder, Praise, and holy Admiration. Again, the Knowledge of the different States of our gracious Redeemer, must certainly strike us with Amazement, and possess our Souls of ravishing Pleasure. Can we view this glorious Person, in the *Depth* of Poverty, loaden with Calumny and Reproach, delivered up to Suffering and Death, yea, to an ignominious, painful, and accursed Death, and that for our Sins, and in order to our eternal Redemption from Misery, which we so justly deserved, without Astonishment at the Grace of God, and without Shame, Sorrow for, and Indignation against Sin and ourselves? Our Hearts must be Stone, if this Prospect affects them not. On the other hand, can we see Him crowned with Glory, and not feel the pleasing Passions of Love, Delight, and Joy arise in our Breasts? It can never be.

5. The *Apostle* earnestly desired a farther Acquaintance with the Power of His Resurrection. That, hath an Influence into our Justification, as it is an evident Demonstration of the Reality and Completeness of His Satisfaction:

faction: And is God's Act of acquitting Him of our Sins, and is His Discharge of us from Guilt, in Him, as Members, whom He represented. He was *raised again for our Justification*. A Surety's Discharge, from his Obligation, upon Payment made, necessarily, infers the Right to a Discharge of the Principal, whose Surety he is. Again, the Resurrection of Christ hath a powerful Influence into our spiritual Life, both in the Principle and Growth of it. One happy Consequence of the Head's rising again is, the Members partaking of a Divine Life from Him. We are begotten again, by Vertue of His Resurrection. Once more, our Resurrection to a State of Blessedness, is a Fruit of His Vivification, who died for our Sins. This is a Point largely insisted on by our *Apostle*, in the *Fifteenth Chapter* of his *First Epistle* to the *Corinthians*: *Because Christ lives, we shall live also*. These are very momentous Truths, and if Faith, is in a lively Manner, exercised upon them; our Souls will be filled with solid Peace, and holy Triumph over all our Enemies, and we shall set very light by all the Things of this World, our Minds and Affections will be raised to Things, that are above, where our risen Lord is.

6. Grace is conversant about the Fellowship of the Sufferings of Christ. His Sufferings were great, and of a penal Nature, in our Stead, and for our Redemption; We therefore, have Fellowship with Him therein. He suffered as our Surety and Head, and we

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as Debtors and Members, were therein concerned: Hence, whatever Benefits and Advantages arise from His Sufferings, they relate to us, and were intended for us. This, the very Nature of the Thing, and the Grounds of that amazing Transaction abundantly testify. And, how great and glorious are those Blessings, which spring from His Agony and Death? Pardon of Sin, of all Sin to those whose Guilt He bore, Peace and Reconciliation with God, Security from Divine Vengeance, Victory over Sin, Death and Hell. Since such eminent Fruits arise from the Sufferings of Christ, and since, there is so much of the Wisdom, Grace, Mercy, Sovereignty, Righteousness and Justice of God discovered in that Affair; and since Faith discerns these Things, therein, what Joy! What Consolation! What Adoration must the Prospect of them produce, and maintain in the Souls of Believers! And an intense Desire to increase in the Knowledge of those Things, is a good Evidence, of a Growth in Grace. On the contrary, if we are content with a *low* Degree of Understanding in these important Truths, and we are but little conversant with them, Grace is under a Decline, for these Things are our Food, our Life, our all, as we are Christians, or spiritual Persons.

7. The *Apostle* longed vehemently for a Conformity to the Death of Christ. By Virtue of His Death, His Members are dead to the Law, Sin, and to the World. His Death

is the Condemnation and Death of Sin, which is the procuring Cause of Death, Curse, and Wrath; and as Faith views this, the Saints die unto Sin, and live unto God, and serve Him on other Grounds and Considerations, than what the Law proposes, in a chearful, spiritual, and heavenly Manner, without *legal* Terrors, which never produce an Obedience that is acceptable to God. And they die to the World. That is to them as a dead Carcase, wholly unfit for their Entertainment and Delight, even in the very best Things it has to boast of. Its *Riches* are not valued, its *Pleasures* are despised, all its *Honours* are trampled on, as *low* and *mean Trifles*, when Faith is much exercised on a crucified Saviour. Hence, says the *Apostle*, by whom the *World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World*. The Men of the World have no Pleasure in Grace, and Grace hath no Delight in the World; it considers all its *delectable* Things, not only as Trifles, but as *dead* and *lifeless* Objects, which have nothing amiable and attractive in them. A Man would as soon *embrace*, and *bug* in his Bosom a *stinking Carcase*, as Grace chuse and delight in the perishing Vanities of this *polluted* World. If it hath not better and infinitely more glorious Objects to converse with and exert itself upon, it will retire and remain unactive. And we may be certain of the Truth of this, that Grace is not exercised, if it is as a Principle, in the Minds of those, who are

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immersed in worldly Cares, carnal Pleasures, and the empty Titles this World can bestow on Men. Oh! how many Professors give *sad* Evidence of a carnal Mind, by a Pursuit after, Fondness for, and Delight in Things, which the Name they bear, obliges them to consider as *dead, putrid, and rotten?* How far are they from desiring a Conformity to the Death of Christ, who are for living in Pleasure, and are never easy, but when they are amusing themselves with one Vanity or another; none of which afford them Satisfaction; and, therefore, they endeavour to supply their Emptiness, by their great Variety, and run round in an amazing Circle of unsatisfying, *new* invented Delights, to the Loss of all their spiritual Peace, Joy, and, it may be, unto the eternal Ruin of their precious Souls hereafter. And hence we may see, that it is a vain Thing to hope for an Increase in Holiness and Spirituality, without a growing Acquaintance with Christ in His Person, the Power of His Resurrection, and in the Fellowship of His Sufferings; for Conformity to His Death is unattainable in any other Way.

8. The Apostle expresses the Extent of his Desire, which was of a *vast* Compass, for it reached unto the Summit of that Glory, God intends to bestow upon his People, at the Resurrection of their Bodies from the Dead. This he longed after, kept in View, and joyfully expected, *waiting for the Adoption*, or that Blessedness and Glory, which belong unto the Children

Children of God, who are *Heirs* of Him, and *Joint-Heirs* with Christ; and this he explains by the Redemption of the Body, in that Place. And elsewhere, he declares the same earnest Longing for this happy State, wherein *Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life*. This was his Aim, and the Bent of his Desire: *If by any Means I might attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead*. His Proficiency in heavenly Knowledge, Grace, and Holiness was very great; but far short of what he aimed at: *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*; that is to say, I am so far from having arrived to that Glory, that I am not yet perfect, or furnished with that Knowledge, Purity, and Love, which the Souls of departed Saints are the Subjects of. And, therefore, he desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better than the present State; but inferior in Glory, to that which will commence, immediately upon the Resurrection, when the Saints will be rendered immortal, spiritual, and glorious in their mortal Part, their glorified Bodies be re-united to their perfect Minds, and made capable of steadily looking upon Christ their Head, in all His Glory, at the Right Hand of God, whose *Face shines as the Sun in its full Strength*, when all the Elect will be presented to the Father, in those Heights of Glory, His everlasting Love appointed them to the Enjoyment of, as Sons and Heirs of Himself: When a complete Victory over all

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their Enemies, Sin, Satan, Hell, and Death, shall be enjoyed by them all. And, when the Divine Father will most clearly appear to be *all* in *all*. ALL to Christ as the Mediator and Head of the Elect Body, *the Church of the First-born, whose Names are written in Heaven:* And ALL in every Member of that Body: And, therefore, Head and Members will eternally unite, in Songs of Praise, Joy, and Adoration for His gracious, sovereign, and infinitely wise Purposes concerning them. Christ the Head will lead, in Ascriptions of Glory to the Father, for the Designs He formed about Him, and His Members, in His eternal Mind, and they will joyfully catch His adoring Language, and express their Gratitude for His redeeming Love, in the lofty Strains of Praise, they will learn of Him in the World above. And the holy Angels, who encircle the Church, placed near the Throne of their exalted Head, with holy Affection, Delight, and Wonder, will gaze upon the superior Glory of the *Bride, the Lamb's Wife,* as the Result of sovereign Goodness, and immense Wisdom, which will engage them all to ascribe Salvation, Glory, and Power to God, and unto Him, that sits on the Throne for ever and ever. This glorious State was ardently desired of the Apostle, and he had it in Prospect; and he followed after, or endeavoured to obtain the Knowledge of this State. *If that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* Calling is
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unto God's *eternal Glory*, and it is a Disposition to converse, in a Way of believing, with those Objects, which will always be viewed in that blisful State. He did not reckon himself to have apprehended; his Knowledge, though very extensive, was not complete; but one Thing above all others he did, *forgetting the Things that were behind, i. e. the World*, on which he had turned his Back, with an Intention, never more to afford it a smiling Look, in its most pleasing Dress and Forms, and as to the Things he had already learned of a spiritual Nature, he would not dwell on them; but as a Person in a Race, to which he alludes, looks not back on the Ground he has run over, but continues his Course without Stay or Abatement, of his Pace, that he may win the Prize for which he runs, so would he pursue his End in View; *Reaching forth towards the Things that are before*. Glorious and precious Things he had enjoyed Views of by Faith; but not content with those Prospects, his Desires were intensely carried forth after new Glories, which he knew, would open to his clear, uninterrupted, and endless View in the better World, where he vehemently longed to be. *I press towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*. Effectual Vocation is a high Calling indeed: It is glorious in all its Causes, *viz.* the impulsive, the rich Grace and Mercy of God, the procuring, the Blood of Christ, the Efficient, is the good

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Spirit of God. Its final Causes, that God may be honoured and glorified by us, He *forms us for Himself, that we may shew forth His Praise*: And it is with a View to our Enjoyment of God, for we are *begotten again to an Inheritance, that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in Heaven for us*. And the Nature of it is spiritual and glorious: Its Effects are all excellent, and holy. It is the Calling of God, and that as in *Christ Jesus*. As a new Covenant God and Father in and through Him, to all those, who are the happy Subjects of this Vocation. The *Prize* is eternal Glory and Blessedness. The *Mark* we must reach if we receive the Prize, is Christ in His Person, Offices, Work and Benefits. For those who have not the Son, have not the Life of Grace, nor shall possess the Life of Glory. The holy *Apostle* pressed towards Christ, as his *all in all*. As the Foundation of his Hope of Pardon, Peace, Acceptation with God, and as his Title to future Glory. And as He, who alone could keep and preserve him to that State, and put him into the Possession of it. *The Father has given Him Power over all Flesh, that He might give eternal Life to as many as He hath given Him*. Oh! the holy Ardor of this excellent Saint and great *Apostle*, to improve in spiritual Knowledge, fervent Love, and true Holiness, he was so intent on these Things, that he regarded nothing else. And, herein, he proposes himself,

self, as an Example to others. Could we imitate him, how happy should we be?

I think it may not be improper to make some Observations, on the gracious Experience of this eminently holy Person. And,

1. Surely, we must be convinced, that as the Essence of Grace consists in a spiritual Knowledge of Christ, Growth in it necessarily supposes an increasing Acquaintance with His Excellency and Glory, as the Head and Saviour of the Church. For if real Grace is a Perception of His Beauty, in His Person, and of His Suitableness to our Condition in the Character of a Redeemer, certainly, an Advancement therein, must consist in more clear Views of His Glory, which never fail of changing our Minds, in a higher Degree, into the heavenly Image, even *from Glory to Glory*. Hence, is this Exhortation given us: *But grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ*. A Mind wholly destitute of the spiritual Knowledge of Christ, is devoid of Grace. For, without this Knowledge, *the Heart cannot be good*. And, where there is but a *low* Degree of it, there is but a *small* Measure of Grace. Only let it be observed, that it is an Understanding of spiritual Things themselves, that is designed, and not merely a Perception of their Truth. Persons capable of the latter, may eternally remain incapable of the former. For this Kind of Knowledge is proper to holy spiritual Persons.

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2. All Endeavours after Improvement in Holiness, without mixing Faith with the great Doctrines of the Gospel, whereof Christ is the Sum and Substance, will prove ineffectual. One important End of the Christian Ministry, is to promote Spirituality and heavenly Mindedness in Believers; and this End cannot be answered, but by proposing to their Consideration, evangelical Truths, and their acting Faith upon them. That Ministry, therefore, which is most spiritual, is best suited to answer this great Design. Such who act in that Sphere in the Church, under the Influence of various Motives, may determine to say little, if any Thing, in the Course of their Ministry, on some Points of Doctrine; as this is not to their Honour, so it is not to the Advantage of those, who hear them. And, to such a Height, is this prudential Caution carried by many, as that very little is declared concerning the Origin of our Salvation, *viz.* the Divine Sovereignty, on which it entirely rests, and into which it must wholly be resolved: Concerning the *certain* Efficacy of the Death of Christ, because that is inconsistent with the corrupt Notion of a general Ransom, nor concerning unconditional Justification, nor of the determining Influence of the Grace of God, on whomsoever it is exerted, in order to their Conversion. The Effects hereof are Ignorance, and a lifeless Formality in Religion.

3. When

3. When we enquire into the State and Frame of our Souls, let us especially consider, how Christ, and evangelical Doctrines stand in our Esteem. If Christ is not precious, dear, and infinitely valuable in our Account, we know Him not, nor have a just Claim to the Character of Believers: *Unto them that believe, He is precious.* If He is in our Estimation, *fairer than the Children of Men: The chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.* If His Person is the Object of our Choice above all others, because of that transcendent Glory we see in Him. If His Benefits are the Matter of our Delight, Joy, and the Ground of all our future Hopes, in Times of Trial, Temptations, and spiritual Distress, occasioned by a Sense of Sin, deserved Curse, Wrath, and Vengeance, and we place our Confidence therein, let what will be the Issue: If our Souls act thus, upon a Conviction of the Wisdom, Fitness and Glory of this Method of Salvation: If the Thoughts we have of Him, of His Benefits, and His Grace afford us our chiefest Pleasure, and if we lament, that we know Him, and love Him no more, and serve Him no better: If we value the Gospel, as it is a Revelation of Him, in what He is, in Himself, in what He is of God made to us, we have Reason to conclude, that *we are passed from Death unto Life, and shall not come into Condemnation,* and that Grace is growing in us.

4. Hence,

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4. Hence, we may learn, what is to be our Aim under a Declension, in order to a Revival of our Graces, and wherein, that Revival consists.

What Saint soever is declined in Grace, whether he is gone off from the Practice of his Duty, or not, Christ, and the Truths of the Gospel are less valued by him, than formerly they were. His Thoughts are less employed on the Person of Christ, and he hath not the same Relish and Savour of evangelical Truths. He is not so much conversant with them, nor hath the same Pleasure in them. His Mind is entertained with other Objects, and his Affections are grown cool to heavenly Things. If this is our Case, as it certainly is, the *sorrowful* Condition of *many* Professors, now a-days, and considering how general this is, it is very much, if it is not thus with us in some Degree: Let us be persuaded of this, as a certain Truth, that a Revival under this melancholy Decay, must begin, where we were directed by the Holy Spirit at our first Conversion, to begin in our Actings God-ward, *viz.* in an Application unto Christ, who is our Life, our All, and in a renewed Acceptation of the Report of the Gospel concerning Him, in His Person, Offices, Work, and precious Benefits: Without this an Alteration for the better is not to be expected, for if it is, we shall certainly meet with a sad Disappointment. Grace when decayed will never recover its Vigour, unless it is acted on
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those glorious Objects, which it is a Disposition to view and embrace with Delight.

Mortification of Sin is the other general Branch of Duty, whereunto true Grace disposes Christians.

Sin, dwells in them. *When they would do Good, Evil is present with them.* And of the Flesh, or unregenerate Part, these Things may be observed, viz. that *no good Thing dwells in it.* The Nature of it is wholly evil; and it is entirely contrary to Grace; and, therefore, no Good can be educed out of it. Fire may as soon be struck out of Ice, as good Dispositions and Motions be produced in the corrupt Part of the Regenerate. And it will never be prevailed upon to concur with the new Principle in any of those Acts, which it puts forth; hence the Mind of a Believer is at no Time, wholly spiritual and holy, in its Acts, there is more or less, of a Renitency in his Soul to what is holy, at all Seasons. He is never so heavenly, as to have nothing of Carnality arising in his Mind, so that his purest Actions are tinctured with a sinful Defilement, and he is not without Cause of Shame and Self-abasement in his best Moments. *All his Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.* No Persons are more remote from real Holiness, than those, who conceit, that they have nothing of Sin. It may be taken for granted, that there is no true Love to God, in that Man, who is confident, that he hath no Averſation of Mind from God.

Again,

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Again, as the Flesh constantly opposes what is good, so it disposes the Will to what is evil; and all its Motions, as under its Direction, are towards Objects that are vain and carnal. Besides, the Violence of it is sometimes very great, and it captivates the Will and the Affections, notwithstanding the Opposition which Grace makes against it. Farther, it is seated in the Heart, and hath Possession in all its Powers. The Understanding, the Will, and the Affections are all subject to its cursed Influence. Hence, Darkeness, Obstinacy, and Vanity, are found in the Minds of the *best*. Moreover, Grace or the new Creature is not more heartily engaged in the Service of the Divine Law, than the Flesh is disposed to the Service of Sin: And it is as possible to bring the spiritual Part into an actual Rebellion against God, as to prevail with the unregenerate Part to subject itself to His Authority in the Law. And, therefore, tho' there are not two distinct rational Principles of Operation in a Believer, there are two distinct Springs of Action, in the one intelligent Principle of Operation, in him, *viz.* his Mind, and one gives the Will, one Direction, and the other gives it another, as contrary as can be, so that he acts according to one Spring of Action in one Way, and according to the other Spring of Action, in another Way, and in both spontaneously; for those contrary Actions are both voluntary, because the Will is the Subject of both these Principles, Sin, and Grace. It, therefore, chuses Evil freely,

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freely, and it voluntarily inclines to Good. And unto neither is it wholly or only disposed. For the Choice of Evil is not made, without Opposition from Grace, nor is the Choice of Good, without Opposition from Sin. Hence it follows, that tho' all the Powers in a Christian are concerned, both in Acts of Sin and in Acts of Holiness, yet none of his Powers are wholly and only exerted in Acts of either Kind. The Presence of Sin prevents the Mind from being entirely spiritual and heavenly, in any of its Acts, and the Presence of Grace, prevents its being wholly evil in any of its Actions. And, therefore, there is a great Difference, in the Manner of a regenerate Man's Sinning, and of the unregenerate Man's, tho' the external Acts may be the very same. The unregenerate are wholly evil in Acts of Sin, the regenerate are not so. For as the good Actions of the Saints have not the Concurrence of the Flesh with the Spirit in them: So the regenerate Part concurs not with the unregenerate Part, in their sinful Actions. Grace opposes Sin, and Sin opposes Grace, and neither Principle hath, nor can have the Heart wholly at its Direction, because it is the Subject of both, as determining Principles of Operation, of a contrary Nature. And, consequently, there is such a War in the Breast of a Believer, as all unregenerate Persons are wholly unacquainted withal. They are Strangers to that Grief and Pain, Joy and Sorrow, which are the Effects of this Combat, between
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the Flesh and Spirit in the Saints. They have not that Will to Good, nor that Reluctance to Evil, which regenerate Persons experience, within themselves. Mortification of Sin is the great Duty, and it ought to be the constant Business of a Christian. With Respect to it, we may observe, that it supposes not the Extirpation of Sin out of the Heart, it will retain its Being in the Soul. This Law is so deeply engraven on our Minds, that we cannot efface it. The highest Measure of Grace, we receive in this State, expels not this troublesome Inmate, it keeps its Residence in the Heart. And its Nature is not at all altered. It is still what it was, and all its Motions and Acts are the very same, which they always were. Regeneration is not an Amendment of our corrupt Nature; but the Implantation of a contrary Principle in our Souls. Nor hath the *Old Man* lost any of his Members; he is complete in all his Parts, tho' his Dominion is taken away. The Flesh in its Disposition continues to be the very same it ever was, and, therefore, the same Thoughts, the same Desires, and the same corrupt Motions in the Affections, may arise and be stirred up, as were before Grace was wrought in the Soul.

Mortification of Sin, implies these Things.
 1. Abstinence from the Practice of Evil. Lust is very fertile in Conception, and its Aim is to bring forth every *monstrous* Foetus with which it is pregnant: Grace is a Check upon it, and
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stiffes numerous of its Productions, as soon as they are formed, they never see the Light, nor become visible to any Eye, but that of the Soul itself, and unto the all-penetrating Eye of God, who knows us far better than we know ourselves. And this Watchfulness upon Lust, lest it break forth, is extended to all its various Branches, its sensitive, and also its intellectual Part. Some who seem, much mortified to sensual Lusts, are greatly captivated by intellectual Lusts. They are not *Swine* indeed, or they do not wallow in the Filth of Uncleaness, Drunkenness, and other fleshly Gratifications; but they are full of *Pride*, *Covetousness*, *Envy*, *Malice*, and *Contempt* of others, which are Lusts as *hateful* as any an intelligent Creature can indulge unto. True Grace opposes Lusts of every Kind, not only those of the Flesh, but of the Mind also: That, which is an Opposition to Sin, as Sin, must be as extensive as Lust itself is. It is the Property of real Grace, not to connive at, or nourish any Evil.

2. The regenerate Part is an Opposition to internal Acts of Sin, as well as Watchfulness against the Eruption of Lust, in external Acts. Without which there is no Purity of Heart, or nothing of that Holiness, which is indispensably required to future Happiness. Many seem to think otherwise, and, therefore, so long as Lust breaks not forth into outward Acts of Sin, they are content, and think all is well. As for Thoughts of Folly, and the
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first Motions of the Will and Affections towards what is evil, they give them no Uneasiness at all. For they have worked themselves up into a Persuasion, that they shall not be accountable for their Thoughts to Him, who requires our Hearts, and if we give Him them not, He receives nothing from us, He values in the least Measure. This was the Case of the *Pharisees*, whom our Lord compares unto *whited Sepulchres*, which are beautiful without; but within *full of dead Men's Bones*. Men may appear fair, whose Hearts are full of Filth and Putrefaction. Evangelical Mortification of Sin, not only respects the Behaviour, but the Heart; there it begins, the Thoughts, Desires, and Affections, are principally, the Seat of it. Real Grace is not content with Regularity of Conduct, its Aim is to introduce into the Mind Spirituality. Abhorrence of Evil in the Root and Spring of it, Love to God, Delight in a Conformity of Soul to His Will. Where these Things are not in some Measure, there is nothing of that Mortification which God requires of Men. Not that Lust is *killed, maimed*, or rendered incapable of acting. Its Life is continued, it remains entire in all its Parts, and it exerts itself, even in the *most* sanctified, in a surprizing Variety of Ways, to their Disturbance, Vexation and inexpressible Grief, many Times, and especially, when Temptations are permitted to assault their Souls. Then it is kindled in the Mind, and unless seasonable Supplies of Grace are immediately afforded,
to

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to assist against it, and check its Violence, it will assuredly prevail, in such a Season, even in the *most* spiritual of the Saints: Hence, the *Apostle* advises them to consider themselves, *lest they also be tempted*: If Grace in a Believer is left to itself, to struggle with Lust under Temptation, Lust will certainly get the better of it, and prevail to such a Degree, as will be Matter of Sorrow to him, all the remaining Part of Life it may be. So far is it from being *dead, mutilated*, or deprived of Power for Action. But yet it is true, that Grace desires its Destruction, and rejoices greatly because of that Foundation it hath to conclude upon its Expulsion out of the Soul, at Death. Oh! says the Christian, that *is worth dying for*. Let this *earthly Tabernacle shake, decay*, and be *dissolved*, that I may no longer, nor any more for ever, be distressed by this *innate Enemy*, which continually annoys, and assaults me, and sometimes with so much Fury and Violence, as strikes me with Terror, and causes me to fear, that I shall not be able to hold out in the Combat. Sin is impatient of the Restraints laid upon it, by Grace, and Grace is uneasy with the Motions of Sin. Hence there is Action and Reaction continually in the Mind of a Saint. Lust inclines him one Way, Grace disposes him to another, a quite contrary Way. And, therefore, he cannot do what he would, and as he would, neither with Respect to Duty, nor Evil. The spiritual Part is often prevented perform-

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ing of Duty, in such a Manner, as it desires, thro' the Opposition of the Flesh: And Lust is hindered of gratifying itself, in that Manner it seeks and endeavours to do it, because Grace opposes it, and, sharply, remonstrates, against its Motions and Tendency. But of this Opposition between Lust and Grace, Holiness and Sin, unregenerate Persons have no Perception at all. Nor do good Men always express themselves on this Subject of Mortification, consistent with their own, and the Experience of other holy Persons, whereby the Faith and Hope of gracious Souls, are sometimes weakened, and Occasion is given to Unbelief to prevail against Faith. This is the Effect of Inadvertency, and of a Want of due Attention to the contrary Workings of Sin and Grace in their own Souls. Much Skill and spiritual Wisdom are required to speak on such Subjects, as immediately affect the Experience of Christians, and these are not acquired, but by the gracious Instruction of the Holy Spirit; and a careful Observance of ourselves. It is full as necessary for Ministers to be diligent in reading their own Hearts, as it is to be assiduous in reading of Books. Without the former, they will not have *the Tongue of the Learned*, nor know how to *speak a Word in Season to him that is weary*.

3. The Influence of the Spirit of God upon the Principle of Grace, is absolutely necessary hereunto. The Difference is very great between Grace and Sin, or between the old Man

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Man, and the *new* Man, relating to Ability for Action. The Flesh needs no external Influence to quicken it to Action. It is at all Times capable of exerting itself, without Assistance from without. *It is a Self-Mover; so is not Grace*, that depends upon an external Cause, to quicken and excite it. The Saints can sin, without being acted by another; but they cannot act in a holy spiritual Manner, without Assistance from Christ, who is their Head of Life and Influence. *Without Him they can do nothing*: They are not sufficient *of themselves, as of themselves to think any Thing*, that is good and holy. And, therefore, good Men and the Church often pray for heavenly Aid and Assistance. Self-Endeavours to mortify Sin, will always prove ineffectual. The Holy Spirit is the sole Author of this Work. And,

1. He gives us a Sense of Sin's evil Nature, and maintains it in our Hearts, without which we shall never be in earnest in an Opposition to Sin and its Interest. And it is only in the Light of Divine Grace, that we discern its Malignity and abominable Nature, which Discernment engages the Soul to seek after its Ruin. 2. The Blessed Spirit of God suggests to our Minds, such Considerations and Motives to Watchfulness against Sin's Encroachments, as are of the most persuasive Nature, whereby we are awakened to use Diligence in the Business of Opposition to Lust. 3. He makes us sensible of, and warns us against Temptations, which are great Incentives to Lust, and influ-

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ences us to oppose them, and gives us Strength against them, and by His opportune and powerful Assistance, we repel their Force.

4. The Divine Spirit communicates Vigour to our Graces, and maintains their Exercise. Sin is no farther truly mortified, than Grace is exercised in an Opposition to it. A *bare* Abstinence from Acts of Sin, may be without a Principle of Grace, and, consequently, without the Exercise of that Principle, in the Minds of those in whom it is; but that is not that Mortification the Scripture speaks of, and which is the incumbent Duty of the Saints. That is an Abstinence from Evil, arising from a Dislike and Hatred of it, as it is displeasing to God, grieving to His Spirit, and prejudicial to our noblest Part. And, these Things necessarily suppose the Actings of the new Creature in us, in a Way of Faith, Hope, Love, godly Repentance, and Self-denial. No unregenerate Person, really is engaged in the Mortification of his Lusts, nor is the regenerate Man any farther exercised in this necessary Work, than he acts his Divine Graces. That subdues and keeps Sin under in the Soul, which *reigns* in Opposition to it, *thro' Righteousness unto eternal Life*, which is *Grace* and nothing else.

And, yet, how many poor Souls delude themselves with Hopes of real Mortification of Lust, because it is, by various Considerations, which are taken from the Consequences of Sin, prevented breaking forth into external Acts!

Acts! Within, it rages and rules the Mind, tho' it is as to outward Acts laid under Restraint, by Terror, occasioned and kept up in the Breast, thro' a Sense of its *direful* Effects. Conviction will not suffer a Man to sin quietly, it will raise a dreadful Storm in his Mind, and compel him to think, closely, of what, according to the just Constitution in the Law, is the *Wages of Sin*, viz. eternal Death. Hence, he resolves not to indulge his criminal Inclinations; but his Will is not thereby turned off from Evil, and towards Holiness. The former is not his Aversion, nor the latter the Object of his Choice, and Delight. His Conscience is against Sin, as it is an unfit Thing, and attended with dreadful Effects; but his Will is in the Interest of Sin, and he would make no Difficulty, of complying with its Solicitations, provided it did not expose his Person to Danger and Misery. Many, it is to be feared, owe all the Denial of their vicious Desires, to this Remonstrance, the natural Conscience, makes against Sin. The only Reason why they refuse to gratify Lust is; such Gratification will destroy their Peace, and involve them in Trouble, which is not easy to be bore with.

The Gospel furnishes Believers with many very cogent Motives to Watchfulness against Sin.

(1.) I begin with the *almost exploded* Doctrine of Election. That is an eternal, sovereign, and gracious Appointment of Men, to

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a Participation of real Holiness in this State, and unto perfect Holiness in the future State. It is a Purpose of everlasting Date; an Act which passed in the Divine Mind before the Foundation of the World, whereby Holiness inchoate, is secured to the Objects of that Decree in Time, and complete Holiness in Eternity. This is a sovereign Act. The Benefits it is a Decree to communicate to Men, clearly prove, that it is a free Act of God's Will: And not an Act which proceeds on the Foundation of Right in the Creature unto those Blessings, it is a Designation of its Objects to the Enjoyment of. The Creature can't reasonably be supposed to have Right to any Favours from God; but such as are included in the first Covenant, on the Ground of its Obedience. And the Want of such Obedience, as that Covenant required, is a Forfeiture of all Right to those Privileges, which that Covenant contains, and subjects it to all the Inconveniences and Miseries therein threatened. And, therefore, it is a senseless Thought, that the Creature can acquire a Right to such Blessings, as far transcend in Excellency and Glory, those, which the first Covenant promises. And, where Right to Favour can take Place in *none*, Sovereignty must be the Foundation of a Decree to bestow them on *some*. Again, it is a gratuitous Act, and the Effect of mere Goodness, Grace and Mercy. A Design to confer Honour on such, whose Conduct justly exposes them to everlasting Shame

Shame and Disgrace : A Resolution to make those for ever happy, who according to Equity, are obnoxious to endless Misery, can arise from no other Cause, than Kindness and Mercy. Such is the Decree of Election. And that it is a Purpose of conveying Holiness, the Scriptures plainly teach ; under which Notion, it is a precious Doctrine to the Saints, who know, that Holiness necessarily enters into Happiness, and desire no other Felicity than what is at least inseparably connected with a Perfection of Purity. With them it is a very engaging Motive to endeavour after Holiness, and a great Encouragement to hope for a complete Victory over all their Lusts.

As for others, who object to this Doctrine, as of a discouraging Nature to serious Minds, who are in Doubt, whether they are elected or no, it may be observed, that they form the Objection, without a due Consideration of the Nature of it, for it is a precious Foundation of Faith and Hope to every Man, who hath the Grace of it, in the *lowest* Measure. And, if by serious Minds, they do not mean regenerate Persons, then, I affirm, that they have no Right, at present, to that Consolation, which the Gospel provides. And, with Respect to such, who may be easy under a Prevalence of Lust, from an Imagination of their being elected, they are guilty of great *Impiety* and *Senselessness* too, for they discover no Approbation of, the Design of Election, or a Desire, that, that Design might

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minister Physick, to a Person in perfect Health. Until Men know, that only Hell, or eternal Damnation, according to Righteousness and Equity, can be expected, by them, on the Foundation of their own Works, I shall never be solicitous at all about their Encouragement and Consolation. All such as are disposed to encourage a Hope in Sinners of enjoying Heaven, without a Sense of their Misery and Helplessness in themselves, have no Warrant from God, for what they act in this Business. A Man must first be convinced of his being obnoxious to Divine Wrath, and *irrecoverably* so, as to himself, either in Whole, or in Part, before he will submit to God's appointed Way of Salvation. And to such the Doctrine of Predestination, contains nothing of a discouraging Nature in it, let some Men *cavil* as they please. On the contrary, it is a precious Foundation of solid Hope and Comfort to all such Persons, who are the only Men upon Earth, that have Right to evangelical *Peace, Joy, and Consolation*. And in Proportion to their spiritual Acquaintance, with this Doctrine, will their spiritual and holy Obedience be, in the Degrees of it. The Notion of Election to everlasting Life may be abused; but the Grace of it never can be, let all its Adversaries reproach it, as they will now, for which they must shortly be accountable to Him, whose this Doctrine is, and which they are capable of knowing is His, by that clear Revelation, He hath given of it, in His sacred Word. (2.) Another


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(2.) Another engaging Motive to abstain from Sin, is the Saints Relation to God. They are His Sons and Daughters, the Consideration of which influences them, not to *touch the unclean Thing*, Sin. Grace disposes them to reason thus with themselves: It is certainly most reasonable and fit, that I who am so beloved, so dignified, and entitled to Privileges, so numerous, and so great, by God, and that in a Way of *mere* Grace and rich Mercy, should *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*.

(3.) Redemption, or the Pardon of Sin by the Blood of Christ, hath the same powerful Influence on the Mind. A Sense of Remission, produces Joy: An Apprehension of the expensive Price of Pardon, excites in the Mind, a holy Indignation against Sin. He, who pretends to the Enjoyment of a Sense of the Forgiveness of his Offences, by the bloody Agony, and Death of *Jesus Christ*, without Experience of an Hatred of Sin, is a Stranger to that unspeakable Privilege. And what a Man hates, he will certainly endeavour to avoid. This is the true Reason, why Sin is not more subdued in us than it is; we are not, as we ought to be, employed in holy Meditations, on the Sufferings of a dear Saviour, in order to procure our Pardon, and save our Souls from Wrath and Hell. It is not possible, that, that Man's Thoughts can be much exercised, on the *Sorrows, Pains, Reproaches, and the accursed Death* of Christ, with a View to his Redemption from Sin, who makes *light* of it,
and

C H A P. IX.

*Of the Causes of Declension in
the Power of Religion.*

 Real Believer will never sink into a State of Unregeneracy: Or Grace in his Heart will never *vanish* and become *extinct*: Yet, he may greatly decline, with Respect to the Liveliness, Vigour, and Exercise of Grace, through various Causes.

I. The Christian may suffer a Suspension of the Divine Influences. There is always such an Influx of Divine Power and Grace, as maintain the Being of the spiritual Principle of Grace in the Hearts of the Saints; but they do not at all Times enjoy the enlivening Operations of the Blessed Spirit, on that Principle, whereby its Actings are interrupted for a Season; their Joy and Consolation abate, and they become less conversant about spiritual Objects. The Flesh, takes this Advantage, and often acts its Part with great Violence, and the Consequence is of a very sorrowful Nature to the Christian; for he declines in the *new* Man, and the *old* Man gains wonderful Degrees of Strength.

Query 1. Why does God thus withdraw from His People, or suspend His comforting Influences,

Of the Causes of Deafness, &c. 255

Influences, which are so necessary to their close Walk with Him?

Ans. 1. He may do this in a sovereign Way: Or without any Cause in the Manner of their Behaviour towards Himself.

2. It may be with a View to teach them more fully the Knowledge of themselves, relating to the Strength of Corruption, and the Weakness of Grace in itself. And, blessed Fruits follow upon it, under His Direction and Guidance, though for the present it is distressing to the Saints.

3. Sometimes it is in a Way of *awful* Rebuke for their Miscarriages. And, when this is the Case, they cannot well be insensible of it, for the Cause is near to View. He will make them know, that though He loves their Persons, He hates their Sins, that though He will not *frown* them into Hell, as an angry Judge, He will correct them as an offended Father, and it may be long before He admits them to former Freedom and Familiarity. This is an *awful*, but a holy and righteous Dispensation of God, towards His disobedient Children. Let us, if we are in this sorrowful Condition, freely, and heartily own the Justice of the Rebuke we lie under, and adore the Favour, that God draws not His *Sword* against us; but in Kindness and Mercy uses His *Rod* upon us, for our great Good in the End.

Query 2. Can this Withdrawment consist with Divine Faithfulness, and God's Care of the new Creature?

Ans.

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Anfw. Yes; for it is neither *total*, nor *final*. He preserves the Being of Grace, and He will revive it again; which two Things comprise the Whole of what is intended in those Promises, that relate to our Perseverance in Faith and Holiness to the End.

II. Another Cause of Declension is the Opposition that Sin makes to Grace in the Souls of Believers. That is ever present with them, and at no Time is it inactive, whether, we perceive it or no. The Advantages it hath, through its Power and Force, Treachery and Deceit, cursed Cunning, continual Presence, the Variety of Objects upon which it acts, and the numerous Temptations by which it is excited, are indeed inexpressible, as every one who carefully observes the various Ways, wherein it assaults us, will soon and fully be convinced. But, alas! we are too apt to be inattentive to its serpentine Windings and Turnings, whereby we become great Sufferers in our *noblest* Part, before we are at all aware of it. This, this, is a stupid Folly in us, and it costs us dear. By this means we get a Blot, our Souls receive a deep Wound, (and astonishing Grace it is, that it proves not mortal) our spiritual Part languishes, and it would certainly expire, but that our gracious Father, and our compassionate Head, preserve its Being in our Souls. No Thanks to us, that its Existence is maintained; for Sin has prevailed with us to act a Part, through our Inadvertency, and extreme Folly that tends to
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our Ruin and Destruction. Grace never thrives, when Lust is nourished: For the Interest of the Flesh, and of the Spirit, cannot be promoted at the same Time. If Corruption is predominant in its Actings, in our Hearts, we cannot reasonably be in Doubt a single Moment, whether we are flourishing, or declining in Grace, it may at once, and without any Debate upon our Condition, be determined, that the Opposite to Lust declines in its Vigour, and that Concupiscence increases in Strength.

Query 1. When may Lust be said to be predominant in its Actings, in a Believer, which is so very detrimental to Grace?

Answer. It hath a Predominancy in the Mind, when it fills the Thoughts, entangles the Affections, and prevails upon the Will to chuse such Objects, as are agreeable to it. To instance in Covetousness, which is a Thirst after the *empty* and *perishing* Things of this World. If the Mind is possessed with anxious Thoughts, about the increasing of our temporal Estate, if our Affections are ensnared, and pleasing Images are formed in our corrupt Fancies, from that Increase, Lust is certainly predominant in a Way of Covetousness, Pride, and a low Ambition. And I think, that Professors, in general, have Reason, remarkably, at this Time, to examine themselves closely as to this Matter; for an eager Pursuit after corruptible perishing Things, is manifestly in many, that which preys upon the Vitals of

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Religion;

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Religion; for while they are forming numerous Projects to add to their earthly Store, they *starve* their Souls, and in Religion appear mere *Skeletons*.

Query 2. Can this Prevalency of Sin in the Mind, consist with true Grace?

Ans. 1. Some would roundly assert, that it cannot; and boldly pronounce every one in whom it is, an unregenerate Person. But,

2. I dare not pass such a Censure; nor affirm, that there is no Principle of Holiness in a Mind, wherein Lust gains such a Predominancy in acting; there may be Life, where there is not Growth and Vigour. Yet,

3. This I am free to assert, that such a Prevalency of Corruption is inconsistent with spiritual Peace, Joy in God, and Divine Consolation. *If any Man loves the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.* If Love to the World fills the Mind, there can be but a very small Sense of Divine Love to us, and but a very low Degree of Love to God in our Hearts. I am confident of the Truth of this, let who will be affected by it. And, I am persuaded, that the Number of such is at this Time very great.

III. A Languor in Grace may be occasioned by a Neglect of Duty. Various Duties are enjoined upon us with a gracious View on the Part of our Heavenly Father, to our spiritual Profit; and, if we do not practise those Duties, we are unmindful of our own Advantage, as well as of the Glory of God,

God, which Negligence must be followed with Loss to ourselves. Those Duties are, Reading the Scripture, Meditation on it, Prayer, especially private Addresses at the Throne of Grace, Hearing the Gospel preached, and the Celebration of the holy Institutions of Christ, all which are intended for our spiritual Benefit. And a proper Attendance to them, is usually blessed of God; to the Increase of heavenly Knowledge, the Establishment of Faith, and indeed unto the Improvement of every Grace of the Spirit. This is that precious Reward, which God has given us Ground to hope for, in keeping His Commandments. On the contrary, we must expect Him to hide His Face from us, if we seek Him not, in those Ways, wherein, He has promised to meet and bless us. For such Neglect is, both a Violation of His Command, and a Regardlessness of our own Good.

Some, perhaps, may say, that they experience no Reluctance to these Exercises; but as the appointed Seasons of such Duties return, they are ready to the Performance of them, and cheerfully discharge them.

I would ask these Persons, if they aim at Spirituality of Mind, and a solemn treating with God Himself therein. If that is not their Aim, they may perform them, without Trouble and Difficulty to themselves; but let them know this also, that it is without any Honour to God. Such whose Intention it is not, in

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Prayer, and other religious Duties, to deal with God in them, will not perceive any Disinclination in their Minds unto them, they may, therefore, wonder, that others, whose Design this is, and, who think that those Duties are not performed to any good Purpose without it, speak of such an Aversion in themselves to Duties, which Reason itself cannot but allow to be necessary. The only Way of discovering this cursed Aversion, in our Hearts, to such Exercises, is by an Aim to perform them in a spiritual Manner. If giving to God the *Lip* contents us, we shall not find any Difficulty to attend that; but if we really desire to give Him our Hearts, we shall quickly perceive, that this, though it is a reasonable, is a most difficult Service. The Insensibility, which many discover of the Aversion of the Mind from God, in a great Measure arises from a Contentment in Duty itself, without their Hearts being raised up unto, and fixed on God in Duty. Without which we do Him no Honour, nor does any Advantage accrue to ourselves by the Discharge of it: Conscience may be quieted, but Grace is not acted.

Readiness to the Performance of social Duties, is not always an Evidence of Liveliness in a Christian, or a Minister. A private Christian may not experience such a Backwardness to Prayer with others, as he finds in himself to that Exercise, in his Closet. The Reason is, when he speaks in the Name of

others: Gifts have their Exercise, his Invention and Memory are set to work, in some Measure; but in a private Address to God, Gifts have less Employ. The Discharge of that Duty alone, therefore, if it is performed, in any tolerable Manner, to his Satisfaction, it must be by the Exercise of his Graces, rather than the Exercise of his Gifts. A Person may seem to be well fitted for that Duty, when he performs it, in the Presence of others, who, in Reality, is but very meanly qualified, in the Frame of his Mind, for the Practice of it by himself. And, therefore, let us rather judge of our Condition, by what we are in the Closet, than by that which we are in the Family, or in the Church; for that Judgment is most likely to be formed according to Truth, because there is not the same Danger of mistaking the Exercise of Gifts, for the Exercise of Grace. And, thus, a Minister, may readily be disposed to the Practice of those public Duties, that are proper to his Station in the Church, and to others he may appear to be zealous and lively in their Discharge, when in Fact, though he exercises his ministerial Gifts, his Graces may be very little, if at all acted therein. Both may be free to exercise their Gifts, when they are not disposed to the Exercise of Grace.

With Respect to the Duty of Meditation, it may be observed, that, *that* is either the Exercise of Reason merely about spiritual Things, or it is the Exercise of Grace upon them.

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them. The former is a close thinking of the Evidences of Divine Truths, in their Connection, and Agreement between themselves, and in what Language they may be most aptly expressed, for the Instruction and Benefit of others: And, this is the proper Business of a Minister. Or Meditation on heavenly Subjects, is the Exercise of the Mind, as it is spiritually illuminated, in contemplating the Nature of evangelical Doctrines, the Glory that is in them, as they are glorifying to God. This latter is indeed the Exercise of our Reason; yet not that merely, but as it is sanctified by the Grace of God. All Meditation on *spiritual* Things, is not *spiritual* Meditation; we are greatly mistaken, if we think it is. I humbly apprehend, it is very necessary for Ministers well to consider this, lest they be tempted to content themselves, with merely rational Acts of the Mind about, or upon the Doctrines of Christianity, which their honourable Calling makes it their especial Duty diligently to study. Unto the former we may be very well disposed, and accordingly practise it, with good Advantage, to others; but with no Profit at all, to ourselves, in a spiritual Sense. Because to our own Benefit, the Exercise of Grace is necessary, in our Meditations. Let not Ministers, therefore, when they examine into the State of their own Souls, proceed in their Inquiry, on, or with Regard to their Acts as Ministers; but with Respect to such Actings of
Grace,

Grace, as are common to them with other Christians: If they do not, it is very probable they may think more favourably of themselves than they ought.

IV. Criminal Indulgencies are very prejudicial to Grace. It may be taken as a certain Rule, that by whatever Means Lust is increased, Grace is impaired; and the Flesh grows in Strength, when, and so far as it is gratified in its Desires. It increases in its Demands, as fast as they are answered, for it is of an *insatiable* Nature. In vain shall we expect Sin to abate of Urgency in its Pleas and Arguings for Gratification, if in any Degree, or in any Acts, we are prevailed with to give it Countenance. *Modesty and Limits it has none.* We shall always find it grow in Impetuosity and Violence, by every Act of Indulgence, it is able, through its Artifice and Cunning, to obtain. The only Way of keeping it under, is refusing to hearken to its Solicitations. If once it gains a small Advance, it will not fail of making great Advantage to itself, by our Inadvertency and Folly. And, in Proportion, to the Increase of the Vigour of Lust, Grace declines in its Strength, Darkness spreads itself over the Mind, and an Indisposedness to spiritual Acts and Duties, is the certain Consequence of all sinful Self-pleasing. There are Lusts of the sensitive, and Lusts of our intellectual Part. Indulgence to the latter, is as dangerous and hurtful, as Indulgence to the former; though but Few seem to be persuaded

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of its Truth. Pride is as pernicious as Intemperance: Covetousness is not less hurtful than Incontinence.

If we follow after *lying Vanities* of any Sort, we *forsake our own Mercies*. Backsliding is always attended with very ill Consequences to ourselves, as it dishonours our Heavenly Father. If our Conversation is *vain, frothy*, and *unguarded*, we have no Reason to wonder, that we are *lean* in our Souls, that our Graces are *languid*, and that we are destitute of those spiritual Comforts we formerly enjoyed. It is a dreadful Delusion, to imagine, that we may *pamper* the Flesh, and at the same Time, preserve the Vigour of the Spirit. *Grey Hairs* will certainly be found upon us, whether we are sensible of it or no, if the corrupt Lusts in our Hearts are suffered to break forth into Act. Indeed, it is not in our own Power to give Spirit to the *new* Man; but we can sorely wound the *new* Creature in us, and bring it under a sad Waste of Spirits, by acting a Part agreeable to the *old* Man. The Eruptions of Lust will assuredly be followed, with a melancholy Decay in Grace. For, *if we live after the Flesh, we shall die, i. e.* we shall decay in the Exercise of Grace, lose our Comforts, and bring our Souls into such a Condition, as may render it very difficult to determine, upon Inquiry, whether we are *in the Flesh*, or *in the Spirit*; *dead in Sin*, or *dead unto it*. Oh! the egregious Folly that many are guilty of, who feed the carnal Part,
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to the great Detriment of their spiritual Part. If indeed they are true Christians, for it must be confessed, that their Behaviour affords very little Evidence of real Christianity.

V. The Declension of Christians, is sometimes owing to an unedifying Ministry. The ministerial Work is intended for the Edification of the Church. And it is very necessary, that those, whose Employ this is, should always keep that great End in View. As it is their proper Business to feed the *Sheep* and *Lambs* of Christ: They ought to see to it, that they set before them the *wholesome savoury* Food of the Gospel. And it is requisite, that they should consider the various Cases of the Saints. What is the Condition of their Souls, What Kind of Temptations attend them, What are their Distresses. And what Weaknesses they are encompassed with. Whether they are growing, or declining in Grace. Without a due Consideration of these, and other Things, it is not likely that they should much assist the People of God, or help them in their spiritual Joy. Moreover, it is very needful for them ever to remember this, that they may please, when they do not profit. Real Edification is often wanting in Hearers, when the Preacher gives them full Satisfaction in his Discourses, because it is neither his Aim, nor their Desire, that they may receive spiritual Advantage. His Intention is to approve himself rather to their *Reason*, than their *Grace*. Hence he more studies Accuracy than Savour,

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may prevent *Stings of Conscience*; but it will never contribute any Thing towards an *Improvement in Grace*. And that Ease of Mind which it gives, is nothing better than carnal Security, which in many, will be followed with endless Destruction, to their great Amazement. And very ill Effects, will attend a Course of formal Obedience, even in the real Christian: For such Obedience is not the Exercise of Grace, and the heavenly Principle, in our Souls, declines, by an Interruption in its Acts. And, therefore, if it is not our Desire and Aim, in the Discharge of Duty, to exercise Grace therein, we shall not be in any Degree the better for the Practice of it. As to spiritual Advantage, such Service will never promote that in our Minds. And, yet, for Want of a due Consideration of this, and thro' the wretched Aversion of our Hearts, to a close and solemn Treaty with God, in the Ways of His Appointment, how apt are we to content ourselves with doing Acts of Duty, without a serious and diligent Attendance, unto the Manner of their Discharge? When this is our Case, we honour God but little, and very small is that Profit our Souls receive from such Performances. There is *nothing* of Holiness in the Obedience of the *Formalist*, and God knows, that sometimes there is but *very little* of it, in that of the *real* Christian.


VII. Unprofitable and vain Conversation brings on the same Consequence. Society becomes either useful, or the contrary, according to the
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the Nature of the Subjects, about which Conversation is held. If the Subject of Discourse is weighty and solid, it is suited to entertain a grave and serious Mind; but if it is trifling, tho' it is embellished with some agreeable Turns of Wit, the Pleasure it gives is very little, and it affords no satisfactory Reflection. Spiritual Converse is calculated to warm the Heart, and improve the Graces of Christians. In this, the *weakest* Believer may bear his Part, and that not without singular Advantage, even to such, who are far his Superiors in Discernment and Abilities. Sometimes, Persons of *inferior* Talents, give happy Evidence, that they are *best* qualified for heavenly Conversation. Tho' they have less of the rational Capacity, they excel in Spirituality and heavenly Mindedness, which fits them for that Kind of Discourse, that is most beneficial to the Saints.

If we indulge ourselves in conversing about Things that are carnal, and pleasing to the Flesh, we certainly prejudice ourselves, and it may be we also spread Injury among all who hear us. If our Converse discovers, that our Minds are worldly, carnal, and vain, it is not improbable, but it may render the Minds of others so too, for that is its natural Tendency.

C H A P. X.

Of the Symptoms of a Declension, in the Power of Religion.

I.  Drowsy and flumbering Frame of Mind, is a sure Sign of Declension. Sluggishness and Inactivity are certain Evidences of a declining State in a Christian: Tho' there may be Life, Liveliness, and Vigour are wanting. Some ill Habit of Mind is contracted, if we are disposed to carnal Ease, and are not prepared for spiritual Exercise, and Communion with God therein. This is a very sad Frame, and Bitterness will be the Issue of it. So it was with the Church: *I sleep, says she, but my Heart waketh. It is the Voice of my Beloved, &c.* If Christ finds us indisposed to give Him Entertainment, when He graciously condescends to make us a kind Visit, we may reasonably expect Him to withdraw from us, and teach us the Evil of our Ingratitude, by the Want of His delightful Presence, as He did the Church, when in such a Frame. It is very much to be lamented, that ever such a wretched Stupor should seize us, as unfits us for holding Fellowship with a dear Redeemer; but this is sometimes our
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Case, thro' the Prevalence of the Flesh. It is with us, as it is with a Person asleep, our Senses are locked up, we neither see nor hear as we ought, nor are agreeably impressed by any spiritual Objects; but are almost wholly taken up with Things of a very different Nature, to the great Detriment of the gracious Principle in us. Besides, then, we suffer the Enemies of Christ quietly to introduce *noxious* Errors into His Church. And this is remarkably true in our Times. As there never was a Season, at least, since the Reformation, wherein Corruption of Doctrine was more artfully, violently, and generally introduced, so never with less Opposition from those, who profess to be the Friends of sacred Truth. As this is the Shame of some, it is an Occasion of glorying in others.

II. Loss of spiritual Appetite is a Sign of Declension in Grace. If we nauseate our heavenly Food, we may be assured, that it is the Effect of some very bad Disorder in our Souls. For, if the new Creature is in a sound and healthful State, it will desire, feed upon, and digest with Pleasure that elegant Food, which our Heavenly Father hath provided for its Support and Entertainment. Our Taste is grievously vitiated by Sin, if we do not savour the Things that be of God. If we prefer *Ashes* to the *hidden Manna*, Grace must be under a *melancholy* Decline, and Corruption grown *strong*. If we do not hunger and thirst after the *Bread*

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and Water of Life, there is Reason to conclude, that we feed upon *Husks*, which are not Food for the new Creature; but its Opposite in our Hearts. When Grace is lively and flourishing, the Mind is disposed to seek after and embrace spiritual Objects; but if the Flesh hath the Ascendant, we slight Heavenly Things, and our Affections are fixed on earthly Things. The Want of a Relish of spiritual Food, and a Hankering after what is agreeable to the Flesh, arise from some dangerous Distemper, which hath seized the Soul; and satisfying our disorderly Desires, tends to fix that Distemper, and to bring the new Creature into a languishing Condition.

III. Declension attends us, if our Love to God, Christ, and to spiritual Things is abated. When Grace flourishes, Love is ardent, our Affections strongly tend towards Heavenly Objects, and we take much Pleasure in them. This is often the Case at first Conversion. The Love of our *Espousals* is fervent, and causes us to surmount those Difficulties, which, when an Abatement in the Warmth of our Affections takes place, we think insuperable. It is very melancholy, that we should lessen in our Love to those Objects, which are infinitely amiable, and most deserving of our intense Desire and highest Delight; but so it is thro' a Variety of Causes in ourselves, and numerous Temptations which we meet with in the World; insomuch, that it may be difficult

cult to determine to our full Satisfaction, whether we are the Subjects of this heavenly Grace or no. And this Decay of our Love, is generally the Effect of Negligence, and Want of Caution to avoid sinful Pleasures: Or it may be occasioned by an anxious Concern about the Things of the World, either will damp our spiritual Affections, and render our Minds vain and carnal. This *Luke-warmness* is very displeasing to Christ, who is recommended to our Esteem, by all that is charming and attractive. I suppose, that none who think themselves concerned in Matters of this important Nature, can wholly be insensible of that Coldness, which almost universally, is found amongst Professors in our Times. And, though it is the Subject of *common* Complaint, but *few* seem inclined to lay it to Heart, as we all ought to do, nor to betake themselves to proper Methods for a Revival of a holy Affection in their Souls. The Aim of some is not, or at least, it doth not seem to be, that Christ and His Grace may become more precious to their Souls; but they are striving after Holiness, with little, if any Regard to the Person, Love, Glory, and Benefits of Christ; hence they labour in the *Fire*, and all their Pains are to no Purpose at all; their Work is consumed, and they are totally disappointed of attaining real Spirituality. The Issue of all their Labour is only a legal Frame of Mind, and such an Opposition to Sin, as the Flesh itself will join in, under the Lash of the

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Law, to whose Conduct and Rule they subject themselves. As these Persons are much pleased, with their imaginary Success, against Sin, because the Axe of the Law hath lopped off some of the Branches of Lust: So none are ~~more~~ inclined to Censoriousness in judging others, who, in Fact, are what they would be thought to be; but in Reality are not so, *viz.* spiritual and holy. Every Man will certainly be deceived, who shall think to introduce Spirituality into his Mind and Affections, without Acts of Faith on the Glory of Christ, for thereby alone is the Mind changed into the heavenly Image, *from Glory to Glory*. If, therefore, Christ is less precious to our Souls, than He has formerly been, in His Person, Offices, Grace and Benefits, whatever we think of ourselves, we are assuredly declined in Grace, let our Opposition to Lust be what it may, under the Influence of other Considerations.

Grace must certainly be declined, if our Affections are chilled towards Christ and heavenly Things: If they are less in our Thoughts, and are not so pleasant and delightful to us as they have been. Where there is intense Love to any Object, it will often make it present to the Mind, and that will view it with Pleasure, which increases the Passion of Love to the Object. So it is in natural Things. And in spiritual Things it is the same. If our Thoughts are but little employed about Christ, nothing is more certain than this, that we love Him but little. What, love Him much, and think

of Him but little? It is impossible. Warm Affections to a dear Saviour will frequently make Him present to the Soul, and cause it to view Him with Wonder and Delight: And that pleasing Prospect of Him, will maintain a Fervency of Love to Him. For spiritual Affections are a great Help to spiritual Thoughts; and spiritual Thoughts promote Spirituality in the Affections.

Some Persons seem to me to be almost utterly unacquainted, with the true Workings of Grace in the Heart, who, yet profess it is their Desire to improve in Grace: For while they are labouring after Holiness, or what is so in their Apprehensions, they plainly manifest, that they have forgot, if they ever knew, how it is to be attained.

IV. Another Symptom of a Decay in Grace, is an Abatement of our Zeal for the Honour of God, and of a dear Redeemer. As the gracious Principle in Believers, is an humble Hope in Divine Mercy through a Mediator; so it is a Concern for the Divine Honour. And, if that Principle is lively and vigorous, it will cause us to decline whatever reflects Dishonour on God and His Ways, and engage us chearfully to practise those Duties with a peculiar Pleasure, that are most conducive to the Glory of God, and which give the clearest Evidence of our Subjection to Christ, as King in *Zion*. If the new Creature is preserved in a healthful State, it will influence us to bring forth *much*

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Fruit to the Glory of our Heavenly Father; but if it falls under a Decay in Vigour and Liveliness, our Concern to glorify God will be very small. And this is evidently the Condition of numerous Professors, at this Time. Of this also, general Acknowledgment is made; but without the Use of proper Means for re-kindling a holy Zeal in our Hearts, for the Honour of God, and of a precious Saviour. Until other Measures are taken, than many pursue, it is not likely, that this Evil will be remedied; but it may be expected to increase, except where it is advanced so far already, as not to admit of any Increase. This may be the *dreadful* Condition of some, who once made a fair Shew.

V. A Thirst after and Fondness of the World, is a Symptom of Declension in Grace. Lawful it is, to desire as much as is really wanted, and we have Ground to hope for the Bestowment of such a Share of the Things of this Life, in some Way or other; enjoying that, Contentment with it, is our Duty, if we never have more, in Possession. And it is of very little Consideration, whether, we have or not. It is even a reproachful Thing to human Nature, to be all Pursuit after the transitory Things of this fluctuating State. Various Considerations may well make us ashamed, even as Men, of our insatiable Thirst after Riches, and those Advantages, which they can procure us, *viz.* the Brevity
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of human Life; those Advantages, therefore, we cannot long possess. The Uncertainty of our continuing in this State, the short Time our feeble Frame, seems to be erected for, especially, in the Enjoyment of Health and Ease; without which, nothing in the World can render us comfortable, as Men. Again, we cannot enjoy much of this World, let us be entitled to ever so large a Share of it. Great Men have no more Enjoyment of what their brawny Servants luxuriously devour in their Kitchens, than of what their Horses eat at the Manger, and drink at the Pond. The gay Liveries of their Lacqueys, and fine Trappings, which adorn the Creatures of their Ease, Ambition and Pride, come not into the Number of those Things they enjoy, nor is it possible, that they should. Besides, Abundance makes us neither wiser, nor better; and, therefore, that Man is a Fool, who thinks, that an Addition to his Fortune, increases his Merit. Moreover, Riches are uncertain Things, and possibly, they may not be long kept. Once more, that Respect which is paid us, in affluent Circumstances, is seldom to ourselves, but to what we have about us; but Mens good Opinion of themselves, will not suffer them to discern the Flattery of cringing Dependents, and of such who intend, sometimes, at least, to have the Command of their Purse.

There are other Considerations which may make us ashamed, as Christians, of our Thirst

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after, and Fondness of earthly Treasure, *viz.* God puts no Value upon it. He throws it away as a Thing of nought, on the very worst Enemies He hath in the World. Again, it cannot do us the least Degree of Good, as we are Christians. Earthly Treasure cannot increase our Grace. Besides, we have infinitely better Things to entertain our Minds with, than magnificent Dwellings, rich Furniture, costly Apparel, and sparkling Decorations. He who hath not, is a Stranger to Happiness, how much soever his vain Fancy is pleased with the splendid Figure he makes. Wherein, he cannot justly compare with a Butterfly, or a Tulip.

These Things are so obvious, that no Difficulty at all obstructs the Sight of them: And, yet, even Professors, at this Time, are much intoxicated with this *strong Opiate*, and seem to discover, that they think, they shall never have enough of this World, while they are permitted to live in it. A full Evidence this is, that they are but very little conversant in a Way of Faith, with a better. No Wonder, therefore, if they are much in Doubt, whether, they are likely to enjoy that World, when they shall be obliged to leave this, at such Seasons as they are compelled, by one Means or other, to exercise their Thoughts about so gloomy and terrifying a Subject. Again,

VI. The Want of Watchfulness against Sin, excited by a quick and tender Sense of its evil Nature, is a sure Sign of a Decay in Grace. When the new Creature is in a good Plight, and is vigorously acted, Sin is exceedingly hateful to the Saints; because then, they have a clear and striking Apprehension of the Malignity of its Nature, which maintains in them a holy Indignation against it. If the Mind is much exercised in the Consideration of that Price, which was paid for the Remission of our Guilt, *viz.* the Blood of the Son of God, as a lively Hope of Pardon is thereby ingenerated; so a Detestation of Evil, whose Pardon cost Him thus dear, certainly springs up in the Mind from that Consideration. And this is always attended with strict Watchfulness against it. For the Soul cannot bear the Thought of countenancing that, which was the procuring Cause of such Shame, Sorrow, and Pain, as a precious Jesus was put unto, felt and endured, in order to our Redemption from that Misery to which Sin subjected us. If any pretend unto an Assurance of Forgiveness, on this Foundation, without any Experience of Shame, Sorrow, and Hatred of Sin, on Account of its vile Nature; I dare boldly pronounce, such a Pretension, to be no other than a vain Presumption, that is likely to be followed by an eternal Loss of their immortal Souls. Everlasting Ruin will certainly ensue, if sovereign Mercy interposes not, to make

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them ashamed of this irreligious Confidence, A Sense of Pardon, through the Death of Christ, ever produces a hearty Sorrow for Sin, and this influences unto Watchfulness against all *Appearance of Evil*. And, therefore, the Want of such Caution must be an Evidence, of an Interruption in the Exercise of Grace, if not of a total Want of Holiness in the Soul.

VII. When we are more governed in our Conduct, by *prudential*, than spiritual Considerations. By such Considerations, I intend, a View to our Reputation and Advantage, as Men, and unto our own Credit, in the Character of Professors. Indulgence to criminal Faults, is attended with Disgrace, at least among the sober Part of Mankind: We can never gain, and preserve an Interest in their Esteem, but by a good Behaviour. And, Irregularity is followed with many pernicious Effects, in the Circumstances of Men, thereby a Person not only tarnishes his Character, but draws upon himself and his Family very great Inconveniences; it prevents him making Provision for their future Prosperity. It wastes his present Substance, and entails Reproach on his Name, and Poverty on his Descendants. If Men make a Profession of Religion, a loose and unguarded Conduct justly renders them the Objects of Slight and Disregard, in the religious Character. Now, if our Circumspection, Sobriety, and Attendance to the
Duties

Duties of Religion, arise from these Considerations, and we are, what we be, as to these Things, by the Influence of such Motives; we have not our *Conversation in the World*, by the Grace of God, but by *fleshly Wisdom*. Grace hath higher Views, and far nobler Ends, in all its Acts. And it is a *glaring* Proof of a *sad* Declension in Grace, if we are acted, by these Considerations, rather than by Views to the Glory of God, and the Honour of Christ. A Behaviour of this Kind, is not only most distant from true Holiness; but it contains not any Thing of real Virtue in it, for even that is the Practice of Morality, upon other and better Considerations than these. The Lord, who searches the Hearts of Men, and is intimately acquainted with all our governing Views, only knows what low Degrees of Holiness, sometimes are found in us, even when our Deportment is such, as raises it above the Censure of those, who have Opportunity of knowing us best. Let us thoroughly consider this *aweful* Truth, that there is no more of true Holiness in us, than there is of a *single* Eye to His Glory in the Denial of our Lusts, and the Discharge of our Duty, in the civil and religious Life. Oh! what Need have we of the Exercise of forgiving Love, since our Defects are so very many? And what Necessity are we under to implore the Divine Aid, to assist us in our Obedience, without which not the least Degree of real Spirituality will ever be

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Lastly, For the Relief of humble Souls under a broken Sense of their Guilt: Or, to encourage them to hope in Divine Mercy for Pardon. And this is a wise, gracious, and holy End of God, in such Permission.

Query 2. How may a Christian under Declension arrive at Satisfaction, that he is the Subject of true Grace?

Ans. 1. If he is very much declined, it may be difficult for him to attain a satisfying Evidence of this Matter. Which is enough one would think, to deter us from that Carelessness and Negligence which occasions it. That is a Condition, greatly to be dreaded, wherein a Person, can scarcely collect any Ground of Hope, that he is in the Way to Heaven; but for ought he knows, at present, he may be in that Path which leads down to the *Chambers of Death*. Is not this sufficient to make us tremble, and start back from an Act of Sin, when we are solicited by the Flesh and Satan to commit it? But alas! thro' the Deceit and Violence of Lust under Temptation, we are guilty of acting a most cruel Part against ourselves; and if a dear Redeemer, against whom we offend, had no more Compassion for us, than we have for ourselves, perish, we must without Remedy. Well it is for us, that God and a precious Saviour, bear us greater Love, than we have for ourselves, without this our eternal Ruin would be inevitable.

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2. It may not be best for us always to attain to Satisfaction in this Point. In some Frames it might prove a Temptation, *viz.* when we aim not at present Actings of Faith and Repentance.

3. The wisest Part we can act in such a sad Condition, is, rather to desire and seek after acting Grace now, than enquire, whether we have acted it before. And if it shall please God, to enable us thereunto, we shall in some Measure be able to discern an Evidence of the Truth of what we are desirous of obtaining Satisfaction about. For, where such Acts be, as are proper to Grace, there Grace most certainly is. Besides, this is the only Way of coming out of this sad Condition. For a Revival cannot be without renewed Actings of Grace in the Soul.

4. Uneasiness with this Condition, and a Desire of being brought out of it, as it is what dishonours God, may be considered, as the *Breathing* of the new Creature, though labouring under much Weakness, which Sin has brought upon it. For, this is a farther View, than our own Peace, and is the Soul's Tendency towards God, as the Object of its Choice and Delight, according to the regenerate Part; and, therefore, where this is, there is Ground of Hope, that the Mind is not destitute of a Principle of spiritual Life, though it is fallen into a very *melancholy* Decay.

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But, 5. Suppose the worst thou canst, Believer, even this, which I know, will be very cutting to thy Soul, that as yet, thou hast never truly acted Faith on *Jesus Christ*: Thou now seest thy Need of Him, and of a Communication of Grace from Him, to make thee what, thou fearest thou art not, *viz.* holy; thy proper Business at this Time is, to flee to Him for Refuge, or to commit thy Soul to Him to be sanctified and saved by Him. And doing this, will be acting, the best and wisest Part thou canst in thy present Condition. Fears of being mistaken in relation to past Acts of Faith, should not prevent thee making a present Application to Christ for Help and Relief, in thy sorrowful State.

Query 3. What is included in a Revival of Grace? Or, wherein consists a Recovery from Backsliding?

Answ. A renewed Conversion after Backsliding, is excellently expressed by *David*, after his grievous Revolt in *Psalms* 51, whereupon I shall make some Observations.

1. He is solicitously concerned about the Remission of his Sins: And Divine Mercy is the Ground of his Hope, and the Matter of his Plea. Not his Surprizal into Evil, nor his Sorrow and Contrition for it, though it appears, that it was very great; but Mercy, Goodness, and Grace alone, without the Consideration of any extenuating Circumstances.

2. He speaks of his Conduct, not in soft and qualifying Terms; but in such Language,

as was suited to its Nature, and expressive of the just Sense he had of it, and of Indignation against himself on Account thereof. He calls it *Transgression*, or *Rebellion*, *Sin*, and *Iniquity*, and expressly mentions the worst Part of his Miscarriage, *Blood-Guiltiness*. When Repentance is truly acted, the Soul abhors tender Names for its Sin, nor does it seek to cover and hide its Iniquities. That, which under Temptation is thought no great Offence, when truly repented of, is accounted heinous. Sin before its Commission often appears to the Mind, as a very small Evil; but true Grace acting in a Way of Repentance for it, throws off all its false Colourings, and views it in its dreadful Malignity. And cannot bear to use tender and soft Language, about so vile and detestable a Thing, as Sin is.

3. *David* considers God as the Object against whom he sinned: And, that he had done that great Evil in His Sight. Wherein a Variety of Considerations are included, which influenced his Mind to an ingenuous Sorrow, *viz.* what the Lord is in Himself, and what He was to him, and had done for him.

4. He confesses the Sinfulness of his Nature: He traces up the Stream to the Fountain from which it proceeded, *viz.* the Impurity of his Heart. As Acts of Sin flow from that Origin, when Repentance is exercised; a Person views that evil Source, with great Humiliation, and Self-Abasement. He discerns, that he is in his Disposition the Reverse

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verse of that inward Truth, which God requires, no other than a Lye, for such is all Sin: Its Nature is directly contrary to eternal Truth, and in all its Pleas and Arguings, it is a Deception of the Mind. Most properly, therefore, does *David* consider it as the very Reverse of amiable Truth.

5. He prays earnestly for Holiness. Whenever Sin is discerned in its malignant Nature, Holiness, its Contrary, is seen in its Excellency and Beauty. And as Sin is then the Object of the Mind's great Aversion, Holiness is the Object of its Choice, and Delight. There cannot be an Abhorrence of Sin, without Pleasure at the same Time, and in the same Degree, in Holiness. True Repentance is not only a Loathing of Acts of Sin; but it also is the Soul's Desire of being imprincipled with a Disposition and Temper of a contrary Nature.

6. He deprecates the Loss of God's gracious, spiritual and immediate Presence.

7. Prays for the Enjoyment of Divine Consolation, and to be upheld in his Walk by the good Spirit of God.

(1) Grace influences the Penitent heartily to acknowledge, that he deserves to be cast away from the gracious Presence of God, and for ever to lie under His awful Displeasure. The Justice of so terrible a Procedure is freely owned; but it is contrary to the Nature of Grace, to be content without a Sense of Divine Favour, and, therefore, a Submission to
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the Loss of God's gracious and glorious Presence, is not required of Grace. For, that Principle, whose Nature it is to desire a Sense of the Favour of God, cannot be content with the eternal Loss of it, that would be acting, contrary to itself. The Supposition of the Possibility of which is absurd. In nothing does the Difference between *legal* and *evangelical* Repentance, more appear, than in this. The former dreads Suffering under God's Anger; the latter, trembles at the Thought of sustaining the Loss of Divine Favour. And, consequently, it is not in the Nature of Grace to dispose a poor Sinner, to be willing to bear that Loss. It confesses, indeed, that it would be just with God to banish the Criminal from Himself; but it can never consent to an eternal Separation from Him. Nor, does God require this of any, neither produce in the Minds of His Children a Willingness for ever to be banished from Himself.

(2.) He had enjoyed precious Discoveries of Divine Love and Goodness, and of an Interest in God's Salvation, which filled his Soul with Peace, Consolation and Joy.

(3.) Such Manifestations had been withheld upon his evil Behaviour. No Man shall enjoy heavenly Comforts, while he continues in a backsliding Frame and Course.

(4.) He longs and prays for the Restoration of those Joys to his Soul. Through sovereign, and infinite Grace, there is proper Foundation to hope for this signal Favour;

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Grace in the Heart, in some Measure, discerns this, and that encourages it to use Freedom in its Address to God for it. The Season of the Returnal of these heavenly Visits, is wholly in the sovereign Pleasure of God, and sometimes they are sooner, and sometimes later, just as it pleases Him to act by His disobedient Children. Some He is pleased to surprize, with melting Discoveries, of His Goodness, Mercy, and Grace, immediately upon their Sin, and, thereby, He breaks their Hearts in Love, and at once recovers them from their evil Frame and Way. This was *Peter's* Case. And, sometimes, He withdraws for a considerable Space of Time, and then the Mind becomes either stupid, through the continued Prevalence of Lust, or sorrowful under a Sense of its shameful Departure from God, and the bitter Effects of that ungrateful Carriage. The former seems to have been *David's* Condition: But he is now awaked out of his Lethargy: And the heavenly Principle again vigorously exerts itself.

Query 4. May a Christian think he is declined in Grace, and be mistaken in that Matter?

Ans. I think he may, and that some gracious Souls are mourning under such an Apprehension, without Cause. For,

1. They have a fuller Knowledge of themselves. One Branch of the Spirit's Work is to furnish us with the Knowledge of ourselves: And we never have right Apprehensions of

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ut Nature, State, and Condition, until our
ark Minds are irradiated with the Light of
divine Grace. According to the Degrees of
that Light, is that Acquaintance, we have
with our own Sinfulness, Weakness, Dark-
ness, and Alienation of Mind from the Life
of God. Grace increased enlarges our Views
of our Hearts, and enables us to look deeper
into that Gulf of Iniquity, which, therein is.
Hence, some, from a growing Acquaintance
with the various Ways, wherein Lust exerts
itself, are induced to think, that they are wax-
ing worse and worse, whereas this Apprehen-
sion springs up in the Mind, not from the
growing Power of Sin; but the increasing
Light of Divine Grace in the Soul. Persons
most sanctified, always are *most* sensible of their
natural Impurity. When Grace is *quickest*
in Acts of Opposition to Sin, it is *soonest* dis-
covered in its corrupt Motions. Hence, Saints,
who have been very eminent for Holiness,
have most complained of their Vileness, and
the Power of Sin in their Hearts. Where
there is the *largest* Measure of Grace, there
is the *fullest* Knowledge of Sin in its Nature,
being, Power, and Treachery. And we are
ever *less* spiritual, than when we are *least*
sensible of our natural Carnality.

2. The Self-Displeasure of these Persons
is greater. Nothing is more natural to us,
than to be pleased with ourselves, on Account
of one imaginary Excellency, or other. This
vanity is often fed even by such supposed

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Qualifications, wherein *real* Merit has not the least Concern. This is one sad Evidence, though over-looked by many, of the dreadful Corruption of our Nature, and is such abominable Pride, as calls for deep Humiliation, and Self-Abasement. Grace, when it thrives, brings us to a hearty and ingenuous Acknowledgment, that we are so far from being possessed of Advantages, which are a proper Foundation, of Self-Admiration, and Applause, that we are the unhappy Subjects of every detestable Quality, which is a just Reason, why a Creature should shrink into nothing in its own Esteem, and be content for ever to lie in the Dust. Without true Grace, no Man is humbled to make such Submissions in Kind, as the State of every Man calls for, and unless that holy Principle is preserved by the good Spirit of God, in lively Exercise, our natural Pride, will soon rise up to a considerable Degree, and we shall fancy ourselves to be at least, somewhat fair and beautiful. On the contrary, if Grace flourishes, we shall clearly discern, that we have no more just Pretension to Beauty, than a Man, who is covered from Head to Foot with filthy running ulcerous Sores, the Stench of which makes him even weary of his Life, as it is offensive to all about him.

3. Sin is more hateful to them. Mere Uneasiness under a Sense of Guilt, is no Evidence of the Being of Grace in the Soul. That which exposes to Penalty, in a Reflection upon it,

it, will give Pain to the Mind, and produce heavy Censures of a Man's Self. Love to Sin is not inconsistent with great Regret, when the Mind hath a painful Sensation of Sin's Demerit. The Consequence of Vice may be dreaded, even when a Man is under the Sway of vicious Inclinations. Conviction disturbs him, and will not suffer him to enjoy Peace; but it produces no Dislike to Sin, as Sin. As Lust is impatient of any Restraint, there may be a strong Contest between that and Conviction, and this Jarring of Conviction and Lust, some take for real Conversion, whereas it is quite of another Nature. Grace brings the Mind to detest Lust in itself, upon a clear Perception of its vile Nature. This is what a legal Conviction will never do, let it be carried to ever so great a Height. And it is a good Evidence of an Increase in Grace, when the Mind is much influenced to hate Sin, because of its evil Nature, and to resolve to forsake, and oppose it, under that Consideration, whatever becomes of the poor Soul, whether it is saved or dam'd. Nothing short of true Grace, will effect such a Disposition of Mind. And, yet some humble Persons, go mourning, who are the happy Subjects of that Disposition; but they shall be comforted.

4. They have a clearer Knowledge of Christ, and He is more precious to them. Grace is a Discernment of the Glory, Beauty, and Excellency of a Saviour, in His Person, and a Perception of the Value, and Preciousness of His

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legal Obedience is founded on Doctrines, which are proper to the Law, and, consequently, Acts of Faith in Christ, Love to Him, and Subjection to His Authority in His complex Character of a Mediator, are none of the Duties of the Covenant of Works. Hence, it follows, that they cannot be the immediate Duties of such, as are under that Covenant. But this by the bye.

(2.) Perfect Holiness is required by the Law. It allows of no Defects, or Imperfections. Infinite Perfection can never give an imperfect Law. This seems to me so clear a Point, that, I think a Man must offer Violence to Reason, if he doubts of its Truth. And yet, some express themselves in such a Manner concerning *Moses's Law*, as cannot easily be reconciled with it. But,

(3.) It is called the Letter, in Distinction from the Gospel, which is stiled the Spirit. *The Letter killeth, the Spirit giveth Life.* Because the Truths of the Gospel excel in Spirituality, those Truths that are proper to the Law. The latter are glorious; but the former exceed in Glory. And they are the Foundation of a more spiritual Obedience, than what the Law, as a Covenant, is acquainted withal.

(4.) This is the Reason why human Understanding discerns, in some Degree, the Propriety of the Doctrine of the Law, and the Reasonableness of that Obedience, which is built upon it. But it cannot discover any Excellency, in evangelical Principles, nor the
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Fitness of that Obedience, which is built on those Principles as its Foundation. And hence unregenerate Persons, what Conviction soever they receive of the Truth of the Gospel, in the Discharge of Duty, they always act under the Influence of the Doctrine of the Law, so far as they understand it, and not in the least Measure agreeable to the Nature and Genius of the Gospel. And even in Believers, there is a Propension to this legal Obedience. Their Minds are not wholly evangelized. Sometimes, and in some Instances, they are not acted by the Influence of evangelical, but legal Motives. It is a good Evidence of a Growth in Grace, when the Soul much attends to the Practice of those Duties, that are founded on the Doctrine of the Gospel, and unto the Discharge of all, under the Influence of that Doctrine.

First, This spiritual Obedience is without Fear; that is to say, it arises not from a Dread of Punishment. He that obeys merely from the Consideration of the dreadful Consequences of Disobedience, no more approves, of the Matter of Duty, than a Vassal approves of the Command of a Tyrant, that is contrary to his own Inclination, though he executes it, because he would not expose himself to his merciless Fury. Such Obedience cannot be pleasing to a Man of an ingenuous Disposition. It can only be agreeable to him, who makes his Will a Law to others, whether it be right or wrong. And, can we think, that it will be accepted with

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with God? No, surely. He abhors it, and must so do; for it supposes, that a Man either thinks himself called unto unreasonable Service, or that his Inclination is to violate the just and equitable Command, if he durst; the former is a blasphemous Reproach cast on God; the latter is the Will's Refusal of Duty and its Choice of Sin, provided it might be, with Safety to the Man himself. If any *Angel* in Heaven, were once to chuse the Practice of Duty, on this Ground, I dare say he would be treated as a Rebel, and immediately become a *bateful Devil*. It is just, that Sin shall expose to Penalty; but to avoid the Commission of it, merely to escape Punishment, is far, very far from that holy Obedience, which God requires of his Creatures.

Secondly, Spiritual Obedience is freely and chearfully performed; not with Reluctance, as Men do whatever they act under the Influence of Terror and Dread. The Law may drive a Person to Duty, but the Gospel sweetly draws him. A Sense of Wrath may restrain Lust, and prevent its Eruption, but it will never produce a contrary Disposition in the Soul. Grace doth the latter, and when it is lively, Obedience is the more voluntarily performed.

Thirdly, It is an Evidence of Spirituality, when Duties are the Matter of our Delight. The Flesh may be compelled to practise them, by various Considerations; but never with the least Degree of Pleasure. Grace is a Disposition

tion to Acts of Duty, and, therefore, it is no unpleasing Task to that, which it is unto the Flesh. And if the new Creature is lively and vigorous, the more spiritual any Duty is, by so much the more, is the Mind of a Christian delighted with it. A Readiness to engage in Exercises, wherein, the proper Business of the Soul is to hold Communion with God; and if that is the Attractive unto those Exercises, it is a sure Sign of heavenly Mindedness. The Persons whose Consolation I here aim at, are happily disposed to those Branches of Christian Obedience, in an especial Manner, wherein, Nearness unto God is to be enjoyed; and on that Account, they take Pleasure in them. And, yet, because they find within themselves, a Reluctance to those Duties arising from the Flesh, they are sometimes greatly discouraged, and think, that surely they are in a declining State; but are really flourishing in Grace. We should not form our Judgment of the Being of Grace in our Souls, by a Freedom from the Being, or Actings of Sin in us; that is not to be expected, so long as we are here: Neither, should we measure our Grace, by the Opposition the Flesh makes against it; but by the genuine Actings of the gracious Principle in us, in Acts of holy Obedience, and in its Opposition to the Motions of the corrupt Part in our Hearts.

The Difference between a regenerate and an unregenerate Person, is this: The regenerate Man is partly spiritual and partly carnal,
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in the Disposition and Acts of his Mind: The Unregenerate is wholly carnal in his Dispositions, and in all his Acts, whether he is employed about what is materially good, or what is materially evil. For such as his Nature is, such are all his Actions, either in the Matter of them, or in their Circumstances. No good Thing is in the Flesh, and, therefore, nothing that is good, can possibly be educed out of it, by the Terrors of the Law, nor the sweet and melting Truths of the Gospel. The Difference between a growing and a declining Christian, is this: Grace is much and vigorously acted in the former; but little and very weakly in the latter. Grace, when it is highest in its Acts, never prevails with the Flesh to unite with it, in what is spiritual; that always, and in all Instances, opposes the spiritual Part: Hence, every Act of Duty a regenerate Person performs, is imperfect and tinged with Evil. And, where there is the *most* Grace, there is the *clearest* Sense of the Opposition it meets with from the Law of Sin, in that Course of holy, spiritual Obedience, whereunto it disposes the Christian. And, therefore, the growing Saint, for Want of a due Consideration of this, may conceive, that he is under a Decline, and walk mournfully on that Account, when he hath the best Evidence of true Grace in his Heart, and of its Increase also.

One Thing I would mention here, in a Way of Caution, and that is, what I have offered, is not intended for the jocund and
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merry Profefſor, ſuch as our Times abound with; let them not imagine, that this is a Cordial which God hath prepared for them. I would as ſoon preſent them with a Cup of Poiſon, while they continue in their preſent Frame and Courſe of Behaviour, as with the conſolatory Truths of the Goſpel. Let them take Care, though they pleaſe themſelves with the Doctrines of Grace, as ſome of them do, that the Law don't by and by ſeize them as its rightful Subjects, in all its dreadful Terrors; if it ſhould, all their Jollity will be ſuddenly turned into Diſtreſs; and their Cataſtrophe will be terrible beyond Expreſſion, and even Thought too. Some may ſay, What, you would have Religion wear a melancholy Gloom? No ſuch Thing is intended. But this I know, that *carnal* Mirth is not the Fruit of real experimental Religion. That produces Pleaſure of a far better Nature, a Joy that is ſolid and laſting.

C H A P. XI.

Of the Ways and Means of a happy Revival, under Decays of Grace.


THE Holy Spirit, in a Way of Efficiency, is the sole Cause of a happy Revival under Decays of Grace. It is not by Might, nor by Power, but by the Spirit of God, that the Work of Grace is maintained and carried on in the Souls of Believers. And, therefore, the Church in a declining State, and under a deep Sense of it, makes Application unto God for a Revival: *Wilt thou not revive us again? That thy People may rejoice in thee.* There is but little Joy in God, when Grace comes under a Decline. Tho' the Holy Spirit alone can effect this desirable Change, in the Frame and Behaviour, of withering, barren Professors: Various Means are appointed of God, which are subservient to this End, and if we neglect to use those Means, no Wonder, that we still have Reason to complain, and cry out, *Oh! our Leanness, our Leanness,* for *the treacherous Dealers*, even under all our Complaints, are *dealing treacherously*, and, therefore, an Alteration for the better cannot reasonably

sonably be expected. All Hope thereof, will certainly issue in sorrowful Disappointment. If we are thoroughly persuaded of this, it will in some Measure, if we really desire a Time of refreshing from God, excite us to use Diligence; in order to revive our Graces, and to strengthen what *remains that is ready to die.*

Much Labour and Diligence are required unto this. It is not complaining of the sickly Condition of our Souls, which will effect their Cure. Confessions of our Follies, that have brought Diseases on us, though repeated ever so often, will avail nothing towards the Removal of them. If we intend the Recovery of our former Health and Vigour, we must act, as well as complain and groan. We must keep at a Distance from those Persons and those Snares, which have drawn us into the Instances of Folly, which have occasioned that Disorder, that is the Matter of our Complaint. Without this we may multiply Acknowledgments and Expressions of Concern for our past Miscarriages to no Purpose at all. It is very great Folly to think of regaining our former Strength, so long as we embrace and dally with those Objects, through whose evil Influence we are fallen into a sorrowful Decline. It is not our bewailing the pernicious Effects of Sin, that will prevent its *baneful* Influence upon us for Time to come; except we are determined to forsake that, to which is owing our melancholy Disorder; never let us think of recovering our former, heathful, and vigorous State;

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State; for if we do, we shall certainly be deceived to our farther Prejudice, if not unto the Loss of our precious Souls: For such a Frame of Mind tends to Ruin, nor can it be prevented, but by sovereign Grace effecting a contrary Disposition in us.

I. We must remember from whence we are fallen, and lay to Heart the sad Occasions of our Declension.

Let us recollect what Convictions of Sin we have had, and what Tenderneſs of Conſcience they produced. How fearful we were of acting any Thing that *bordered* upon Evil, out of a Regard to the Glory of God, as well as the Peace of our own Minds. What Watchfulneſs againſt all Baits and Temptations, which were laid in our Way to enſnare us, we then exerciſed. Let us remember how precious Chriſt was to our Souls. The Views we had of the Value of His Benefits, which ſpring from His Obedience, Death and Sacrifice. In what Manner our Souls deſired to be found in Him, and applied to Him for Pardon, Peace, Righteouſneſs, Wiſdom, Strength, and, indeed for all that is neceſſary to our preſent Conſolation, Holineſs, and future Welfare. Let us remember, how our Souls admired and adored the Grace of God, which formed the aſtoniſhing Deſign of our eternal Salvation from Ruin, which we were fully convinced we ſo juſtly deſerved, and unalterably reſolved upon it; though to effect it, He muſt

part with His own Son from His Bosom, and deliver Him up to Shame, Sorrow, Curse, and a penal Death, His Law and Justice so requiring, if we wretched Transgressors were saved. And shall we not call to Mind, what pleasing Wonder possessed our Souls, from the Consideration of the Honour conferred upon us, *viz.* that God made us His Sons, clothed us with the *best Robe*, with *fine Linen, clean and white*, a Garment pure, spotless, and of infinite Value; adorned our Souls with precious Jewels, the Graces of His Holy Spirit, as Tokens of His infinite Love to our Persons, and the *Earnest* and *First-Fruits* of eternal Glory, whereunto He called us? Shall we be so ungrateful to our Heavenly Father, as to bury in Forgetfulness, the gracious Discoveries of His Kindness, Grace and Mercy to our Souls, when we were overwhelmed with a Sense of Guilt, Curse and Vengeance, which we saw we had contracted, and whereunto we were exposed, without any Ground of Hope of Relief and Deliverance, but only from that infinitely glorious Object, against whom we had been sinning all our Days? Let us remember how sweet the Gospel was to us, what a rich Treasure and delightful Food it was, to our poor famishing Souls; how we delighted in the Ordinances of Christ, that we *sat under His Shadow with great Delight, and His Fruit was sweet to our Taste.* The Remembrance of these Things, on the one Hand, may produce Joy; and on the other, Shame, Sorrow, In-

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dignation and Revenge against Sin and ourselves; when we consider what a melancholy Change we have passed under. Oh! surely with *Shame, Blushing, and Confusion of Face* we must think of our present Declension. What Want of Watchfulness against Sin is now found in us, and what near Approaches do we dare to make unto it? What a Languor is there in our Graces? How little is Faith in Exercise? And how is our Love abated to God, to Christ, to His Gospel, His Ordinances, and His People, the only excellent Persons the Earth bears?

We cannot wholly be insensible, that we are without those gracious Visits of Divine Love from our Covenant-Father, our only Saviour, our best Friend, and *elder Brother*, who was born for our Help and Relief in the *worst of Adversity*, which, in Time past, our Souls enjoyed. And this Distance between God and our Souls, is the Consequence of our *Sin, Sloth, Negligence, and base Ingratitude*. Are our Hearts affected with this as they ought to be? They are not, God knows. We are in a *sad Slumber*, perhaps some are in a *dead Sleep*, as we use to say, and nothing will wake and rouse them out of their wretched carnal Security, but some very shocking and terrible Dispensation, which, whenever, it comes, will put them into the utmost Consternation and Terror; and they may not be able to determine, whether they are *of the Living in Jerusalem, or Sinners and Hypocrites*
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in Zion, whose Portion will be *Fearfulness* here, and *everlasting Burnings* hereafter, notwithstanding that flourishing Profession they once made. Awful Thought indeed! Should we not each of us say, What have I done, to cause God to hide His Face from me? Wherein have I grieved the Holy Spirit, which hath occasioned Him to withhold His benign comforting Influences from my poor Soul, through the Want of which I am attended with Darkness, Deadness, Loss of spiritual Consolation, Joy in God; and am at a great Uncertainty, in my own Apprehension, whether I am in the Way to Heaven, or in the broad Road to Hell and Destruction? Oh! the bitter Effects of Sin; sometimes, even in those, who in the Issue are saved from it, and all its penal Consequences.

II. Consider what Christ required of the Church at *Sardis*, which many Interpreters think, is a Representation of the Church, under the Reformation fallen into sad Declension, and apply it to our Times. He requires them to *remember how they received, i. e.* with what Joy they embraced His Gospel, and received Himself as held forth therein, in His Person, Offices, Work, and Benefits. How they had received His sacred Institutions and excellent Laws, that they had celebrated the former with spiritual Pleasure, and great Advantage; and submitted to the latter with holy Reverence and Zeal for His Glory, as King in *Zion*. Again, He calls upon them

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to recollect how *they had heard*, what Attention they gave to His delightful Voice in the Promises He expressed, the Warnings He gave against Sin, Temptations, and Snares they would meet withal, in the Course of their Pilgrimage in this World, which suggests, that they had been defective in this Matter, which was the Cause of their Deadness and Formality; so that they seemed not to have Life, at least, no Vigour, or Liveliness, were discovered in their Obedience; but they were sunk very much into a dead Formality, in the Course of their Behaviour. Moreover, Christ commands them to *hold fast, i. e.* His Doctrine; this implies, that they were in Danger of having it either *violently*, or *artfully* taken from them, by *open*, or *secret* Enemies. Very needful Advice for us in our *dreadful* Times. Some, with much cunning Insinuation, and all the Arts of Address, endeavour *gradually* to lessen our Regard to those important Doctrines; the rescuing of which, from *popish* Corruption, was the chief Glory of the Reformation; and with daring Insults, proud Confidence, and matchless Injustice, do many reproach and vilify those Doctrines. What Need, therefore, have we of this Advice, and how well is it suited to our Circumstances! Many are sunk into a neutral Spirit, and discover no Concern, what Principles are introduced, nor what Doctrines are given up. They are but speculative Points, and if they can but promote practical and experimental Religion,

Religion, for their Parts, they are quiet and easy. Do not then evangelical Truths enter into that Religion they would advance? Are not those Truths the Foundation, Life, and Soul of it? If not, let us boldly renounce it, as no Religion of the Blessed *Jefus*; this is what our Profession of being His Followers obliges us unto, let these *cowardly* Men take that Renunciation how they please. If, indeed, they are the Ground of that practical and experimental Religion, these Persons pretend it is their Design and Endeavour to promote, why then are they unconcerned, about what Treatment those Doctrines meet with? The Introduction of other Doctrines, than those the Reformers boldly defended against the *bellish Fury* and *Rage* of *Rome*, brought into the Reformed Church, that *Pride*, *Contempt* of Spirituality, which have been, and still are nourished by those Doctrines, which in the End, unless God prevents it, will prove our *Ruin*, and render the Reformed Church, for Corruption in Principles, *full as infamous*, if not more so, than that of the *Whore*, which Christ, will *consume with the Spirit of His Mouth*, and the *Brightness of Coming*. Never let us part with those Things *wherein is Continuance*, and by which we are to *be saved*, if saved we shall be, through the *Fawning* and *Flatteries* of these *professed* Friends, but *secret* Enemies of the Gospel of Christ. Nor let us ever be frightened out of our Faith by the *Rage*, *Contempt* and *Scorn*, that open Ad-

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versaries pour upon us, because of our Regard to the Doctrines of God's sovereign and distinguishing Grace, though through the Defection of many; but few may join us in an Opposition to that Tide of Fury, against those precious Truths, which flows in upon us with *great Rapidity*. Let us stand our Ground, keep firm hold, *and quit ourselves like Men*, in the Defence of Principles, which ought to be far dearer to us, than the most valuable Privileges we can enjoy of a temporal Nature, yea, than Life itself. For if those Truths are rent from us, from what can we derive Peace in Trouble, Strength in Weakness, Joy in Sorrow, Light in Darkness, Comfort in Life, or Hope in Death? And on what may we build an Expectation of Happiness hereafter, if the Doctrines of the Reformation are wrested from us, which will not deceive us? On Nothing. Though Multitudes now desert them, through one Cause, or another.

These Doctrines are, efficacious Grace in the Conversion of a poor Sinner, communicated on the Foundation of eternal Predestination to everlasting Life. Complete Atonement for Sin, by the Death and Sacrifice of Christ. Justification by His Righteousness, without any Works of our own, and received by Faith, in order to our Peace, Joy, and Hope of Heaven, as our Title to that State of Happiness. Final Perseverance in Faith and Holiness, what Shocks soever we may meet with from Sin, Satan, or the World. These blessed Truths
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are the only Supports of a Divine Faith, and heavenly Hope; and I am not afraid, or ashamed to say, that he is no Christian, who is ignorant of their Sweetness, Power, Spirituality, and effectual Influence to promote Holiness in all its Branches, let some clamour as long as they think proper, and charge these glorious Truths with Licentiousness. But I must acquaint them, that there is a Time hastening, wherein they will be obliged to give an Account to Him, whose these Doctrines are, and whose Glory is much concerned in them, for all their *ungodly* and *hard Speeches* against them. They will do well to consider what Defence for themselves, they shall be able to make. *Reproach, Slander, Falshood, and Contumely* will not be suffered at His Tribunal, though now they are permitted to practise these abominable Vices, to run down Truth, and propagate destructive Errors.

III. We must do *the first Works*, if we design a Revival of our Graces. This calls for Humility and Diligence, to both which our proud and slothful Hearts are too much disinclined. We must be content to begin afresh, both to learn and practise, since through Carelessness and Sloth we are gone backwards, in Knowledge, and Practice too. It sometimes is with the Saints, as with *School-Boys*, who by their Negligence are so far from Improvement, that they have almost forgot the *Rudiments* of a Language, or an Art, they have begun to learn; in which Case, it is necessary,

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that they make a new Beginning; this suits not with their Pride, but unto it they must submit. So the Christian sometimes has need of being taught again, *what are the first Principles of the Oracles of God*, when for the Time he has been in the School of Christ, his Improvement ought to be such, as would fit him for giving Instruction to others in these *plain*, and *easy* Principles. But through Negligence he has let them *slip*. And, we must be content to pass through the very same Lessons of Conviction, Sorrow, Humiliation, and Repentance, we long since learned of the Holy Spirit; whatever we think of the Matter, a Revival cannot be without it, this is humbling to our Pride; but our past Negligence, has rendered it absolutely necessary; besides, we must attend to those Duties we formerly did, *viz.* Prayer, Reading, Meditation, Self-Examination, Hearing, and Ordinances; if we do not, we may multiply Complaints of our Leanness, without adding any Thing to our Vigour, Strength, and Fruitfulness. As we are, so we shall continue to be, or grow worse, if that can be, unless we use those Means which Christ has appointed for our Growth in Grace. And, we must re-assume our former Watchfulness against Sin, and all Occasions of it. Decline those Ways, and that Sort of Conversation, which have proved Snares to our Souls. This wise Part we acted at first Conversion, and a new Conversion requires our acting the very same Part. Perhaps, some *jolly, loose-walking, merry*

merry Professors, who abound in our Times, we have contracted Acquaintance with, their Discourse, and the Manner of their Behaviour insensibly tainted our Minds at first, and caused us to remit somewhat of our strict Watchfulness, that has been followed with those Acts of Backsliding, whereunto we owe that Barrenness of Soul, we so justly complain of. If this is our Case, and we cannot by *serious* Advice, and a *grave* Example reform them, let us forsake their Company, and get rid of a Conversation, by the ill Influence of which, we may long suffer, if not to the Day of our Death. Grace will not long thrive, under *the Droppings* of a *pernicious* Conversation, nor will it revive where it is sunk, and decayed, under that Disadvantage. If we throw Water upon a low Fire, we must surely be sensible, that will not maintain and revive it. Vain Conversation is to Grace, what Water is to Fire.

Query, How can this Declension consist with Promises of Growth?

Answer. Our Increase in Grace is often represented, by the Growth of Plants, which in some Seasons is interrupted. As in Winter, thro' the Sun's Distance, nipping Winds, and pinching Frost, they lose all their Beauty; but their Sap abides in the Root, and upon the Return of the enlivening Sun, through the Influence of its quickening Rays, the Sap ascends, the Plant which not long since afforded no pleasing Prospect, salutes our Eye,
with

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with a delightful Green, it presently buds, its Blossoms open, and it yields precious Fruits. So the Christian, when the Sun of Righteousness withdraws, and the North Wind of Temptations blows upon him, at the present, he grows not, Grace *subsidēs*, Corruption *rises*, and the Beauty of his Profession is gone, and no Fruit is brought forth to the Glory of God: But when the Sun of Righteousness returns, with the chearing Rays of His all-quickenig Power and Grace, the Saint revives, his Graces, that have lain hid, discover themselves again, he recovers his former Beauty, *blossoms as the Rose, grows as the Lilly*, spreads his Root, and bears much Fruit to the Glory of his Heavenly Father. Let us not then, on a sudden pronounce a Person dead, who is, it may be, now barren, he may have brought forth Fruit; and tho' it is Winter with him now, he may see a returning Spring, and again afford us a lovely Prospect; and for this, let us wait and hope.

Lastly, let the Saint recovered from Backsliding, and Declension, adore the Divine Goodness, Grace and Mercy discovered in his *new* Conversion. If he takes into serious Consideration, his provoking Carriage, and God's Patience, Long-Suffering, Faithfulness to His Promises, and the Immutability of His Love to his Person, under all his Unworthiness: If he well considers from what a sad Frame he is delivered, and what Advantages, Divine Pleasures, and signal Favours he is again brought

brought unto the Enjoyment of: If he thoroughly considers what new Honour is done him, by making him again fruitful in good Works, to the Glory of his Heavenly Father, and to the Joy and Usefulness of his Fellow Christians, Pleasure inexpressible, must flow in his Breast. Let him also remember that he is still in a State of Imperfection, and Snares, and Dangers, and that, therefore, another Declension may succeed: For as Grace communicated to him at his first Conversion, prevented not his former Decay, which has been so much to the Dishonour of God, and the Grief of his Soul; so neither may that Grace bestowed on him, in this new Conversion, preserve him from a future Declension: In order to this, renewed Supplies of Grace, are necessary to keep him in a humble, watchful and depending Frame of Soul on his Head of Life and Influence. Lust upon this Revival, is indeed much subdued; but he may possibly live to find it act with as much Violence, as ever it did, and Grace may again subside, tho' it now advances, and expands itself in the Soul much.

However spiritual he now is in his Frame, he is not got beyond the Reach of Temptation, and he still is the Subject of that, which under fresh Temptations, will not only incline him, but prevail with him also to act a Part, unless Divine Grace interposes to his Succour, that will involve him, in the same sorrowful Condition he is now emerged out of.

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of. It is enough to make one tremble to think what Prevalency the Flesh has gained even after the most affecting Discoveries of Divine Love and Goodness, that have ever been vouchsafed to Saints, most eminent for Holiness. Some have got their foulest Blemishes, after they have received the most signal Tokens of Divine Favour, they were ever indulged withal.

Let this teach us Humility and Caution; they are, I am sure, the useful Lessons we ought to learn, by those awful Dispensations, under which some eminent Saints have passed, with whom none of us, are comparable in Holiness, and the Power of Religion.

CHAP.

C H A P. XII.

Of the Temptations of the present Age, and Cautions against them.


 Temptation is exceedingly dangerous to us, because we have that in us, which is fit Matter for it to act upon. It is not with us, as it was with our *great Master*, who had no Disposition in Him, upon which a Temptation could fix itself, and therefore, He repelled the Force of all Sorts of Temptations, without their making the least ill Impression on His Mind. *Hilberto the Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me.* We are like unto a City besieged by powerful Enemies, wherein, there is a strong Party on the Side of the Besiegers, who seek for an Opportunity to give them Entrance, and betray it into their Hands, which can never be safe, without a strict Watch kept on these intestine Enemies, as well as a resolute Defence of it, against the Enemies without. Consider, Believer, what Swarms of evil Lusts there are in thine Heart, which are always ready to join with any Temptation, and, thou wilt soon be convinced of the Necessity of constant Watchfulness against Temptations, that

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that without it, thou canst never walk safely a Moment. In an unguarded Minute, the Enemies of thy Soul will find an Avenue, get Entrance, and presently fire thy Lusts, and cause thee to act a Part, which will fill thee with Shame, Sorrow, and Fear, perhaps, all thy Days. Consider likewise, that not every Defensative in such a Time of Danger will secure thee. It may be, thou thinkest, that a Regard to thy Honour, Interest in the World, &c. will be sufficient Security in Temptation; but, alas! when once Temptation hath got Access to thy Soul, and Lust is kindled by it, thou wilt find, that it will break thro' all such Restraints, with as much Ease, as *Sampson* burst the Cords wherewith the *Philistines* bound him when asleep. All such Reasonings will prove like a *bowing Wall*, and a *tottering Fence*, before Temptation mingled with our Lusts.

We enjoy our Liberties as Men and Christians. Separation from the Establishment, is not deemed by our Laws criminal, nor are we on that Account subject to any Penalties. We live in the quiet Possession, of our Property, in Safety and Peace, and are protected in the free Exercise of our Religion, by the Laws of our Country. So that we suffer no such Hardships, as our Fore-fathers underwent to preserve a good Conscience, and in using of those Means, which Christ hath appointed for our heavenly Instruction and Edification. They suffered Confiscation of Goods,

Imprisonment, corporal Punishment, and Death, because they had the pious Courage, not to join with others in Acts of religious Communion, which, they were persuaded, were not agreeable to the Institution of Christ. But as for us, tho' at some Periods, Clouds have gathered, and dreadful Storms have threatened us, God, in his Providence, has wonderfully appeared in our Behalf, dissipated those Clouds, and prevented the impending Storms, with which we were threatened, breaking upon us: So that we have no Experience of the Sharpness and Severity of Persecution for Conscience Sake, nor of the Temptations, which attend a suffering State on Account of our Profession, because it is somewhat different from that, which is by Law established. But our long Ease, Increase of Wealth, and the great Change, which these pleasing Circumstances, through the Corruptions of Men's Hearts have introduced, in the Temper and Behaviour of numerous Professors, have exposed us to Temptations no less dangerous, and threatening, than the sharpest Persecution. And Multitudes have been hereby much ensnared, if not eternally ruined. We are *waxen fat*, we are *grown thick*, and upon it, we have *forsook the Lord that made us, and have lightly esteemed the Rock of our Salvation*. What, Loss of Substance, of Liberty, of Ease, yea of Life could not effect, that, Liberty, Affluence, and worldly Honour, have done, in many among us, *viz.* rendered them

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them carnal, careless, and loose, both in their Principles and Conduct, so that now we are but little like them, whose Descendants we are, in *Zeal for Truth*, in *Love*, *Humility*, and *Mortification to the World*. And these melancholy Circumstances are growing upon us, more and more. If Men are not *stark* blind, or are not wholly disposed to take no Notice of the State of Things amongst us, they must be obliged to confess the dreadful Truth. And what will be the Issue God only knows. It is very probable, such, as *very few*, if any, have Expectation of, or will at present be persuaded, so much as in the least Degree, to give Attention unto. Our present Security in that deplorable Condition, into which we are sunk, in a religious Sense, is no Symptom in our Favour. God hath often brought the *severest* Judgments upon a People, when according to *political Maxims*, they have imagined themselves in the greatest Safety. And if His Treatment of us should not be such, I am sure, it will be entirely owing to sovereign Mercy, for our Circumstances are of that Nature, as leave us without any other Ground of Hope: And, how long it may be His Pleasure in the Dispensations of His Providence, to act towards us on that Foundation, is a Secret, in His own Breast, and absolutely out of our View.

Our Times may very justly be esteemed (*χαλεποι*) *difficult*, *troublesome*, and *dangerous*. For many, who are of the religious Character,

are manifestly under the Influence of such Vices as the *Apostle* in that Place enumerates. Some are captivated by one, and others, by other Vices. Some are *proud*, and others are *envious*, or *Lovers of themselves*, or of *Pleasures*, are *heady*, *high-minded*, &c. It is not to be thought, that all these Vices are found predominant in any Man pretending unto Religion; but take a Number of those together, who have a *Form of Godliness*, and they fill up this dismal Account, or afford Matter for this Charge in all its Branches, sad and heavy as it is. Now, to be good, and regular in our Behaviour, in such a Season, is difficult. For one Person is likely to prove an ensnaring Temptation to us in one Way, and another in some other Way; and such a Multiplicity of evil Practices, among Professors, renders a strict Watchfulness exceedingly necessary; without it, we shall soon find ourselves in such Entanglements, as will prove of very bad Consequence to our Souls. To maintain Strictness of Walk and Conversation, when *Carelessness*, *Indifferency*, *Sloth*, and *Love to the World*, with *Indulgence to those Evils*, which always accompany such a Frame of Mind, prevail among Professors, is the Privilege and Happiness of but a few, because it requires more Guard upon ourselves, more Self-denial, and less Conversation, with such dangerous Companions, than, through the Treachery of our Hearts, we are disposed to exercise. Sometimes, we are sooner laughed out of our Religion,

by Men of this Character, than we are driven out of it, by the Fierceness and Cruelty of others, who persecute us for our Profession, who make none themselves. In my Opinion, they who make Pretences to Religion, in Words; but in their Behaviour are any Way irregular, are the most dangerous Companions, a good Man can intimately converse with. Because, he may be tempted to think, that there is not much Evil in this, or that irregular Practice, through a charitable Judgment he forms of the Persons, addicted to those Practices. Familiarity cannot, without great Difficulty, be held with *loose* Professors, but to the Prejudice of Grace in our own Souls. For, alas! where Watchfulness against Temptations is wanting, the Mind is certainly in a fit Frame for falling in with them, as soon and as fast, as they offer, of what Nature soever they be. And, he, that is insensible, that evil Conduct in others, may prove a Temptation to the best, is unacquainted with the Depravity of human Nature.

I. Temptations levelled against our Faith, they are many, by open, and avowed Enemies. The Gospel, since the Reformation in *England*, never met with more violent Opposition, in most of its Branches, than at this Time it does. The Doctrines of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation of Christ, of His Obedience to the Law for us, in order to our Justification before God, the great Truth
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of His Atonement and Satisfaction for Sin to the Law, and Justice of God, the Doctrine of the Nature, Necessity, Efficacy, and Effects of the Holy Spirit's Operations on the Minds of Men, are the Matter of the *rude Scorn* of Multitudes. Men seem determined to bear down those Principles with *supercilious*, and *haughty* Airs, *blustering* Language, and *bold* Charges of *Absurdity* and *Nonsense*. And, therefore, our Adherence to those sacred Truths, forfeits in the Esteem of these Men, a Claim to the Character of *rational*, and much more to that of being *wise* and *ingenious*: To such a Height are their *Insolence* and *Pride* swelled at this Day. Formerly, those who disbelieved those Doctrines, were at no small Pains and Labour to advance Objections against them, many of which were plausible; but now *Contempt*, *blasphemous Reproach*, *Noise* and *Triumph*, are the Weapons used to batter down our Faith, and Hope in the Blood, Righteousness, and Grace of our precious Redeemer.

The Reasoning of the present *most celebrated* Adversaries of evangelical Truths, requires no great Labour to answer it. Impertinence set off with the Advantage of Confidence, and Effrontery, is to do the Execution intended. And it is not a little surprizing how far this End is answered by that *Bluster*, which these Men make. And, it is very observable, that they are exceedingly lavish in their Compliments one to another, and liberally

now below Encumbrances on one another, for this Endeavour this Way. And *Infidels* seem to have learned this Art of demolishing Religion by *Sar* and *Banter* upon it, rather than by advancing Objections against it in a fair Manner. Like *real* Inquirers after Truth. And, yet, they put on the *Grimace* of being passionately in Love with Truth, whenever, and where-ever they can discover it. While they pretend to be absolutely directed of all Prepossession and Prejudice, and to follow where-ever Reason leads, without the least Reluctance, they give glaring Evidence, of their having thrown off all *Awe* of God, and Regard to *Impartial* Reason too, in the Manner of their treating inspired Persons, their Writings, and the Doctrines which they have delivered. And by these *unfair*, and *unreasonable* Methods, they have been able, to turn out many from a religious Regard to the sacred Texts, and have taught them to admire themselves for being profanely witty on what is sacred.

II. The secret Enemies of Divine Truth are numerous, from whom many Temptations arise.

1. Men of this Character very rarely are open, and frank in declaring their Sentiments. They chuse to lie concealed, as to their Notions, until such Time, as they have been able to ingratiate themselves into the good Esteem of those, whom they intend to bring over

over to their Sentiments. And very watchful they are for every Opportunity and Advantage, which offer, that are favourable to their Design, nor will they fail of improving them to the utmost. Doctrines which they have no Relish for, it may be some in their Congregations firmly believe, and, therefore, they dare not at once, and in a plain Manner, deny them; but by long Silence about them, and now and then advancing Principles, not consistent with them, they *insensibly* instil them into the Minds of their Hearers, and draw them off from that Regard they once paid to those other Principles. It is very sad, what Influence such Conduct hath had, and still hath in many Places, I had almost said to the *total Subversion of Christianity*. And, in others, this Sort of Demeanour is very likely to be productive of the same dreadful Effects. May the good Lord have Mercy upon His Churches, and preserve them from being seduced by these Men, who *lie in wait to deceive*. If Christians are not excited to Watchfulness against them, by their Insinuation and Address, whereof they are perfect Masters, they will be in great Danger of being drawn aside. For these Men are *competently* qualified for that Kind of *Disservice* to the Church of God, whereunto they have devoted themselves, and unto which they direct all their Studies.

2. This Sort of Persons frequently declaim much against Controversy in Religion, and

vation from Misery. And by this Means People become almost wholly Strangers to that Doctrine, and many contract great Prejudices against it.

Moreover, the Use of the Terms *absolute* and *inconditional* Justification is discontinued. The Righteousness and Sacrifice of Christ are, it may be allowed, an Influence into our Pardon and Justification; but something must be performed by us, in order to an Interest in, or Title to the Benefits arising from His Obedience and Death; and this Performance is not *wholly owing* to the Operation of Divine Grace on our Souls. Which is nothing better than the *popish* Doctrine of Justification: But how sadly are some *well-meaning* People imposed on by this Cunning of the Preacher? They think his Meaning is, that the Blood and Righteousness of Christ, are the sole and entire Causes of our Remission and Acceptation with God: Whereas the *artful* Preacher is at a great Distance from any such Meaning.

Again, the Terms *irresistible* and *effectual* Grace are never heard. *Aids*, *Assistances*, *Operations* of Grace, and *Divine Impulses*, are spoken of with great Freedom. By this Means, some who ascribe the Whole of their Regeneration to the Grace and Spirit of God, are persuaded to think, that so the Preacher means; but it is *wholly a Mistake*; and he has others about him, who are well aware of it, and applaud his *imposing* Art: They are fully sensible, that he intends no more than
this,

this, that God assists us in turning from Sin to Him, and that our Choice of Holiness is from ourselves, without the determining Influence of Divine Grace upon our Wills in that Choice. And, so the Preacher gives Satisfaction to the *unwary Calvinist* and the *Arminian* also.

I add, these Persons cautiously decline the Use of the Term, Merit; but the Doctrine of Merit they are Advocates for, in that Sense, wherein, it was understood by *Papish* and *Protestant* Writers. They disclaim Merit of Condignity; but maintain the Doctrine of Merit of *Congruity*. That is to say, tho' they deny, that in strict Justice, Men merit Favours at the Hand of God: They plead, that it is *fit*, that Persons so and so qualified, should become entitled to those Blessings, which are *conditionally* procured, by the Death and Sacrifice of Christ. And thus, without the Use of the Term, they *effectually* propagate the Doctrine of Merit, in that Sense, the *greatest* Adversaries of the Grace of God, towards Men, have desired it might be maintained. For no Man, who acknowledges, that human Nature is ruined by Sin, can ever contend for Merit, in a higher Sense. We have lost the *chief* Glory of the Reformation, and the very *Life* and *Soul* of *Popery*, greatly flourishes amongst us, to our great *Scandal*, and the Satisfaction of the *Romanists*. This is the *dreadful* Condition of a Multitude of those, who pass under the Denomination of *Protestant* Dissenters. And, what will be the Issue of these

these Things, the Lord only knows. May we be prepared for the *worst*. Some terrible Dispensations, we may justly fear, will befall us, in our present Situation, it is so exceedingly bad; nor is there any Room, as yet, to hope for an Amendment in our Circumstances.

Another Instance of the *Art* of these Persons is, they speak with great Contempt concerning *Schemes* and *Schematists*. This is done with a Design of broaching some *erroneous* Opinions, without being called to an Account, for advancing Principles inconsistent with the *Analogy* of Faith. Thro' the *Weakness* and *Inconstancy* of some, and the *Supineness* of others, this *Artifice*, absurd as it is in itself, hath answered the Intention of those, who have used it, in many Instances. For they have been suffered to vent Opinions contrary to the *common* Faith of Christians, without any *Rein*, or *Check*, from some, because they would not seem to be *bigotted* to any particular Scheme, or Party. These *artful* Men must know, that religious Principles are linked together, and compose a Scheme, notwithstanding they speak against Schemes in Religion, and against religious Schematists.

Farthermore, the Use of the *Assembly's Catechism* is laid aside; under a Pretence, that some Doctrines are contained it, too *abstruse* and *difficult*, for Children to take in; it has been *revised*, and some of the Doctrines struck out, and others explained away. Other *Catechisms*

teebifms have been compofed and recommended to Ufe, wherein the Doctrines of the diftinguifhing Grace of God are left unmentioned. The defired and intended Effect hath followed in many Places, *viz.* a total Neglect of thofe folid and glorious Truths, wherewith the Hearts of Chriftians formerly were warmed, and by whole kindly Influence upon them, they meekly, patiently, and courageoufly fuffered Reproach, and almoft all Manner of Evils, lived comfortably, holily, and died triumphantly, even in the Midft of Flames. Add to thefe Things, much Art is ufed to perfuade us, that this and the other is not neceffary to be believed, in order to Salvation. With fome, not the Doctrine of Chrift's Deity. With others not His Satisfaction, at leaft, as *proper, full, and afcertaining* Peace, Pardon, and eternal Salvation. With others not the Doctrine of Juftification by His Righteoufnefs. With others, not the Doctrine of effectual and efficacious Grace. Nay, with fome, it is not thought abfolutely neceffary, to believe, that *Jesus* was the *Meffiah* promifed. They feem to think Salvation is poffible to an unbelieving Jew, provided, that he is but honeft and fincere. Indeed it is well, if he hath not as much of Chriftianity in him as they have.

Once more, there is an Opinion prevailing, which is of a dangerous Nature to the Souls of Men, difhonourable to God, and naturally tends to leffen our Regard to the Merit of a Saviors

viour's Blood, *viz.* that God is a benevolent merciful Being, and will make all reasonable Allowances for the Imperfections and Follies of Life. Are these moral Imperfections? Are these sinful Follies? If they be, what Allowance is it reasonable for Infinite Rectitude and Purity to make, for our being guilty of such Imperfections and such Follies? The Supposition of the Reasonableness of any such Allowance-s, is a horrid Reproach to the Holiness and Justice of God, who is *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*. May my Soul eternally detest the Thought. Is not this likely to beget light Thoughts of Sin in the Minds of Men? Doth it not tend to cause them to imagine, that the Remission of such Offences is no great Matter? Who will think themselves much concerned to look to the Blood of Christ for the Pardon of such small and unavoidable Offences? But this is a Foundation it seems, whereon some lay a considerable Stress: Altho' it agrees neither with the Religion of Nature, nor the Religion of Jesus; nothing like it is contained either in the Law, or in the Gospel of Christ. A deceased Minister of the Independent Denomination, says, " My greatest Concern is, " to have rational and solid Expectations of future Happiness. I would not be mistaken, nor " build on the Sand; but would impress my Mind " with a firm Belief of the Certainty of the future World, and live in a practical Preparation for it. I rely very much on the rational Notions we have of the moral Perfections

" tions

“ tions of God, not on^v as a just, but a bene-
“ volent and merciful Being ; who knows our
“ Frame, and will make all reasonable Allow-
“ ances for our Imperfections and Follies in
“ Life; and not only so, but upon our Repen-
“ tance and Faith in Christ, will pardon our
“ past Sins, tho’ never so many and great.

“ In Aid of the Imperfection of our rational
“ Notions, I am very thankful for the glorious
“ Truths of Gospel Revelation, which are an
“ additional Superstructure on the other. For
“ tho’ we can believe nothing contrary to our
“ Reason, we have a great many excellent
“ and comfortable Discoveries, built upon,
“ and supper-added to it. Upon this double
“ Foundation would I build all my Expectati-
“ ons, with a humble and awful Reverence
“ of the Majesty of the Great Judge of all the
“ Earth, and a fiducial Reliance on the Mercy
“ of our Lord Jesus Christ, to eternal Life.
“ In this Frame of Mind I desire to fear God,
“ and keep His Commandments.” Part of a
Letter from Mr. *Neal* to Mr. (now Dr.) *Miles*
of *Tooting*, quoted by Mr. (now Dr.) *Jennings*,
in his Funeral Sermon. Page 36, 37.

The Law makes no Allowances for our
Defects and Foibles, and the Gospel gives us
no Ground to hope for the Pardon of any
Sin ; but that of the atoning Blood of the Son
of God. Every Imperfection and every Act
of Folly exposes us to the just Condemnation
of the Law, and the Blood of Christ alone
procures our Deliverance from that Condem-
nation.

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To this Cause, we owe the Remission of our *smaller*, and *greater* Transgressions. No Sin at all is pardoned, but upon the Foundation of Christ's Atonement. Nothing more contrary to the Strictness and Purity of the Law, and to the Grace and Justice of God, in the Gospel, can be advanced, than this, that the Remission of our lesser Offences is an Effect of Divine Benevolence and Clemency, without Respect to the Blood of Christ, as the meritorious Cause thereof. Besides, Salvation is not an Effect of what is called Benevolence and Mercy in God, which we are supposed to have *rational Notions* of, distinct from the Christian Revelation, and whereon that is thought to be built. It is the Result of mere Sovereignty. God saves not Sinners, because it was fit and proper he should save them; but because it was His Pleasure. And, consequently, evangelical Discoveries, are not built upon and super-added to our rational Notions of God. Those Discoveries are absolutely new, and, in their Nature wholly distinct from those Truths, which the Law contains relating to Sin and Sinners.

For, that affords no Ground of Hope of the Pardon of Sin, or the Salvation of Sinners. There is no Principle in natural Religion, which suggests the Probability of the Recovery and Happiness of Criminals. It is Men's false Notions of it, which cause them to think there is. Natural Religion is no other than the Doctrine of the Covenant of

Works. That Covenant promises the Enjoyment of Good to the innocent Creature; but it threatens the Transgressor with Death and eternal Misery, and it leaves him in that Condition, into which his Guilt hath plunged him, without any Foundation of Hope of a Deliverance from Sin, and its dreadful Consequences. According to that Covenant, nothing is to be expected from our righteous Judge; but *Curse, Wrath, Vengeance, and fiery Indignation, to devour us.* And, therefore, it is most false, that the new Covenant is built upon, and super-added to any natural or rational Notions we can have of God in His moral Perfections. The Measure and Rule of our natural Notions of God is the Law, that is, the Religion of Nature in its Purity and Perfection. And, what is there in the Law, which only promises Life and Happiness to the innocent Creature, and denounces Vengeance, and everlasting Death to the Sinner, that can furnish us with the least Hope of the Pardon of Sin, and of the Welfare of Criminals? Nothing at all. *Believer,* let me intreat thee to beware of this *pernicious* Doctrine, which is nothing but a Corruption of the Religion of Nature, and is falsely said, to be the Religion of *Jesus*. In Fact, it is most remote from it. His Religion supports the Religion of Nature in its full Compass and Perfection. For, though it is distinct from it, as it is a Revelation of Salvation to sinful Men, yet it provides for
its

its Honour and Authority in the great Business of our Redemption. The Christian Religion is not a Diminution of the *Glory, Authority, and Extent* of the Law, in order to our Recovery; but a full and effectual Provision for its Honour, in all its Branches, in our Pardon and Salvation. Better it were ten thousand Times, that we should perish for ever, according to our Desert, than that any Slur should be cast on the Holiness and Justice of God, in that Way, whereby our Recovery is brought about. If once we imagine, that our Imperfections, and unavoidable Weaknesses, in the present State, are pardoned, or that Allowances are made for them by Divine Benevolence and Mercy, otherwise than on the Foundation of the Blood-shedding and Sacrifice of Christ, we shall soon conceit, that there is less, far less of Evil in those Imperfections and Foibles, than in Fact there is, and that the Remission of them is a Thing to be expected, as of Course. And, therefore, that Sorrow, Humiliation, and Self-Abhorrence for them, will not be found in us, which certainly ought to be. This is the common Doctrine of our corrupt Times; but it is deservedly treated with *Contempt*, and *Indignation*, by all those, who are concerned, either for the Purity of natural, or revealed Religion. It is a dreadful Corruption of both.

IV. Some act a *neutral* Part: Appear on no Side, you cannot tell whether they are of this, or of the contrary Opinion. This

Sort of Persons have Ends to answer, which are pleasing to themselves, and sometimes, their Views are accomplished, and when they are, they congratulate themselves, on the happy Success of their Caution and Prudence, and look upon some others with Contempt, for their Folly discovered, in entering on the Defence of *unpopular* Opinions, whereby they have fixed an *Odium* on their Characters, and rendered themselves unacceptable to many, who hold the others in Admiration. But how do these Persons *endure Hardness as good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*, who decline coming into the Field, and not dare to meet an Enemy of His *in the Gate*, lest they become Sufferers by it in their Reputation, or *secular* Advantage? I am sure, these are not Times, wherein, we can please Men in general, and preserve the Character of faithful Servants to Christ. Opposition to His Gospel, is now become too common to allow of that. Through this Neutrality of some, the Interest of sacred Truth declines, erroneous Doctrines are propagated, without any Check in many Places. Those who think themselves concerned in Matters of this Nature, must in some Measure be apprized of the Truth of what is declared.

Many Temptations attend us, which are very likely to have an ill Influence on our Minds, relating to *real* Holiness, and the Power of Religion. The Effect of a Neglect of the Doctrines of the Reformation,

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and embracing of contrary Principles, hath not been such, as it was pretended, would follow that Change of Opinion. Holiness has declined in Proportion, to the Degree of that Alteration of Sentiments. Let Men pretend what they please, a Departure from those Principles will never be followed with good Effects, in the Minds and Morals of Mankind. We are as far departed from that Purity of Conversation, which was the Honour of the *Reformers*, as we are gone off from their Faith.

1. A mistaken Notion of Holiness is now become general. Men imagine, that to be Holiness, which is not so. And, consequently, they are content without it, and conceit they have it; but in Fact they are ignorant of it, and Enemies unto it. Morality is thought to be Holiness, and evangelical Obedience is not accounted necessary. Hence Self-Appause is maintained in such, whose Minds are void of true Grace.

Regularity of Conduct is esteemed all that is necessary to future Welfare. Regeneration is so stated, as will necessarily lead us to conclude, that it is a Change whereof some have no Need, and that they cannot be the Subjects of it. For, if it is no more than a Reformation from Vice, and a dissolute Course of Life, which many affirm it is not, the sober virtuous Part of Mankind have always been, what a regenerate Person is supposed to be, and therefore, they cannot pass under that Change. As for Faith in Christ,

Christ, or a Dependence on His Blood and Righteousness for Pardon of Sin, and Acceptation with God in Judgment, Love to His Person, Delight in His Presence, and a cheerful Obedience to Him, arising from a Sense of His saving Benefits, they are Things, which have no other Existence, than in the Imagination of ill-guided, and mistaken Minds, in the Opinion of many. This is an open Renunciation of all Christianity; and leaves us no other Religion, than that of corrupt Nature somewhat improved, and reinforced, at the best, by those moral Precepts, and positive Rites, stripped of all their Importance and Significancy, in the Writings of the New Testament. These Men are *blind Leaders of the Blind*, and unless God mercifully prevents it, those who *lead*, and those who are *led* by them, will *both fall into the Ditch*. For they are entirely unacquainted with the Nature of Holiness, *without which no Man shall see the Lord*. It is a fond Imagination, that Morality is that Purity which the Christian Religion requires; as necessary to Happiness; without we have more than that, nothing is more certain than our *eternal Ruin*. But when evangelical Doctrines are given up, Gospel Holiness and Obedience *must be rejected*, as *imaginary* Things. And, therefore, those, who deny the precious Truths of Attonement for Sin, by the Death of Christ, Justification by His Righteousness, and the Necessity of the effectual Operations of His

Spirit on the Souls of Men, to make them meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, act consistently, in rejecting the scriptural Account of Holiness, for that cannot be supported without granting the Truth of the Principles on which it is built, which are those mentioned, with others of the like Nature. Take away the Object of that Faith which purifies the Heart, and, you necessarily destroy the very Notion of its Being: For, that is a mere Nullity, if its Object is removed, and if the Grace of Faith exists not, Holiness, which is supposed to spring from it, can have no real Existence, and, consequently, we must sink into bare Morality, and the Christian Religion can be no more, no other than a Refinement of natural Religion from Corruption, and a Reinforcement of it, which some of these Men say it is: Others of them are more upon their Guard; they mean the same; but will not own it.

2. A selfish and worldly Disposition hath took deep Root in the Minds, and discovers itself, in the Conduct of many Professors. The Interest of this World engrosses so much of the Thoughts, Desires, Affections, and Time of numerous Persons under a Profession, that Religion can come in but for a very small Portion of either. And, some whose Business of Life is so very urgent upon them, that they cannot spare a few Hours from it, to attend on the Worship of God, are able

to devote whole Days now and then, to Recreation and Diversion, from that Fatigue, and Hurry. And how many rack their Invention to form Schemes, for increasing their earthly Store, who scarcely are at the Expence of a serious Thought, in what Way they may promote the Interest of Truth, Religion, and Holiness, either in themselves, or others! If this is not the Case, why are Meetings appointed for transacting the Affairs of Christ in His House, so *slenderly* attended, as they be, and occasional Assemblies for public Humiliation, so seldom favoured with the Presence of some, who no doubt could give their Attendance, at least oftner than they do, if *Lukewarmness*, and *Love to the World*, and the Things of it, were not the Cause of their Absence, many Times? Unto such a Height is this Pursuit after the World grown in many, that it proves Matter of Discouragement to some, who are inclined not to pursue this World, in such a Manner, as to leave no Room for attending to Things of infinitely greater Moment. In a Word, such are our Circumstances, as to many, that if a Part of one Day in seven, was not appointed to the Service of God, I cannot tell, whether any Portion of Time would be spent by them in Divine Service, or no, in a public Way. *When will the Sabbath and New Moon be over, that we may buy and sell, and get Gain?* Seems to be the inward Thought of too many, Not only so, but other Prac-

tices also discover this Frame to have Possession in the Minds of many Professors, which are sad Blots upon their Characters, and furnish the Enemies of Religion with abundant Matter of Reproach.

3. With many there is very little of Self-denial, as to carnal Pleasures. This is found among those, who are of advanced Circumstances. Their Affluence is dreadfully abused in the Gratification of vain Desires, and it seems, as if it was without Remorse. They can act as the World, and run in the same Circle of Vanity as they do. And such who do not chuse to conform to the World, are the Objects of their Contempt on that Account. Strictness of Conversation, and Separation from carnal Men, in the Course of their Conduct is laughed at, as *needleless Scrupulosity*, and a *foolish Squeamishness*. Professors can grace Gaming-Tables, with their Presence, in Places of public Resort, *surround the Stage*, and bestow their *Applauses*, on the Actors of *Tragedies* and *Plays*, with the very same Delight as others, who have nothing better to entertain their Minds, and carry off Time, which passes away, and is swiftly bringing them to a Season, they wish were at the greatest Distance, *viz.* the Hour of Death. Oh! killing Thought, must that Moment come? It must, and speedily too. And when that *fatal* Minute approaches, what keen Reflections, and what bitter Reproaches will an awakened Conscience suggest to those, who dream

dream away Life, thro' being intoxicated with these and many other bewitching Pleasures? Men have long proposed to indulge themselves in sinful Delights, and in the Issue to lie down in Safety; but it will never be; God forbid it ever should be. He must lay aside His Righteousness and Justice, if the End of these Ways is Peace.

4. But few are careful to keep up Family Worship. There is Reason to fear, that it is very rarely practised by many, who would be thought to be Christians. The *late Hours* of our *Clubs*, which call for our Attendance almost every Evening, will not allow us Time, to give God Thanks, for the Mercies of the Day, to confess our Sins to Him, and intreat His Protection in the Night, in the Presence of our Children and Servants. If Worship is performed in the Family at all, it is on the Evening of the Lord's Day, when *Alehouses* and *Taverns* cannot enjoy our Company with any Decency. This was not always the Case. Professors formerly did not behave themselves in this Manner. We are much degenerated in our Conduct, and shall we wonder, if we have lost our Comforts? That is nothing strange, it cannot be with us, otherwise than it is, so long as we continue to behave in the Manner we do.

The Prophet *Daniel* attended the Duty of Family Prayer three Times a Day; who had many Affairs of great Moment to transact, relating to the State. But we cannot attend

is dreadfully mistaken, in thinking that
will be the Subjects of our Delight here-

Motives to Caution and Watchfulness,
to enter into, or be surprized by Temp-
of any Kind, are many. I shall men-
one.

Our dear Saviour gives us this Advice;
and pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.
I do not doubt of His kind Intention there-
we have such incontestible Evidences
Reality and Strength of His Affection to
love always consults the Good and Wel-
fits Objects; and, therefore, it must be
undoubtedly, that our Lord designed our Advan-
in this Advice. He will never abridge us,
of Liberty, or Pleasures, which we may
without Injury to ourselves, and Dis-
honour to His Father and ours also, through
Grace. Shall we then fail heedfully to
attend to His Counsel? If we do, we shall
have sad Occasion to bewail our Folly in that
matter. It is well for those, who have not
had Cause to confess the Truth of this, from
grievous Experience,

If we consider the Tendency of Temp-
tations, we shall see Reason to shun them.
They are many of them levelled against our
faith, as has been observed. If we do not
watch against Temptations of that Sort, we
shall insensibly abate in our religious Regard
those important Truths, from whence we
derive all our spiritual Peace, Joy and Con-
solation;

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solation; the Consequence of which will be *Leanness* of Soul. Some, who seemed once to have a delightful Savour of the precious Truths of the Gospel, through a Want of this necessary Caution, are moved from their Steadfastness, and are seeking for Comfort in such a Way, as they will never find it in this World, and on a Foundation, which will not support their Hopes in a dying Hour, of the Enjoyment of Happiness in the next. Let us *watch* and *pray*, that we may not thus be shaken in our Regards to those *momentous* Principles, which have been *sweeter* to our Souls, *than the Honey, and the Honey-comb*. Again, let us consider what is the Tendency of the Temptations which attend us, relating unto an Abatement of Strictness, in our Conversation and Walk. The sorrowful Effects of them we may see in many; and if we have no Experience of their *baneful* Influence on ourselves, it is owing unto sovereign Grace and Mercy, which hath preserved us, in the midst of so many dangerous Snares, that have been laid to entrap our Feet in our Christian Pilgrimage. Let us be so wise as to learn Caution, where there is Danger; by the Damage, others have sustained through a Want thereof; and be persuaded of the Truth of this, without making the Experiment, that we are as liable as others, to suffer in our best Interest, by being *imprudently* free with Occasions of Sin.

3. Let us consider well the Treachery of our own Hearts. They are full of Lusts,

which are always ready to fall in with evil Temptations of any Kind, and, therefore, ought by no Means to be trusted, in Dalliances, with those Objects, which in Temptation are presented to the Mind. If we are so foolish as to place any Confidence in them; and flatter ourselves, that the Temptation we may be under shall not carry us any great Length, in that, we shall contract great Guilt; and it will be much, if the Flesh exceeds not those Limits, which in the Beginning of the Temptation, it prescribed to itself. For, whatever it pretends unto of that Nature, its evil Desires are, in Fact, boundless. And, therefore, we may with as much Safety trust Gunpowder, within the Reach of Fire, as our deceitful Hearts with Temptations. This is a cogent Motive to Watchfulness and Prayer, to be kept by the Power of God, in these *perilous* Times. If we are insensible of our Danger, through the Want of necessary Consideration, we shall not walk *circumspectly*, and it may be, that may be followed with such Effects, as we shall have just Reason to bewail and mourn, on Account of, so long as we have Breath. That which is the Case of some others, may possibly become ours, if we, like them, should be so *mad* as to *sport* with Folly. For, what are we more than others, in ourselves? Nothing, as to Holiness and Strength against Temptations.

4. We shall do well to consider, what Influence Temptation hath had over the Souls


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of some eminent Saints; and what bitter Effects it produced, when they were left under its Power. It evidently appears, that Persons most spiritual, will fall an easy Conquest to Temptation, if they are not upheld by powerful Grace, when under it. If some have been overcome by the Force of it, who have given Evidence of being Subjects of such a Measure of Holiness and Grace, as not any, I think, will presume to compare with them therein, but such who have great Reason to conclude, that they have none at all; how cautious ought we to be, that we enter not into Temptation? And what Necessity of strict Watchfulness is there, since we are surrounded with so great a Variety of Temptations, and such as arise from the Conversation of some, of all Sorts of Persons, and to whom it would even be a Pleasure, to prevail with us to act as they themselves do, to the Dishonour of Christ, and the Reproach of His Gospel; for our corrupt Times are not without Professors, of such an abominable and diabolical Disposition as that is. They are loose in their Behaviour, and they like to see others so too.

C H A P. XIII.

*Of Communion with God, in
the Course of that Obedience
we are required to yield unto
Him.*

T is evident, that Fellowship hath always subsisted between God and His Saints. In every Age, He hath graciously condescended to give them Intimations of His Favour. *Old Testament-Believers* enjoyed this inestimable Privilege. We often meet with such Modes of Speech, in the Writings of the Prophets, as put this Matter out of all Doubt, and raise it far above *modest* Objection, though the Terms Communion and Fellowship are not used: What we intend by them, for Substance, is clearly and plentifully expressed: *God lifted up the Light of His Countenance* upon his People. *Made His Face to shine* upon them. He granted to them *the Joys of His Salvation*. *The Sun of Righteousness arose upon them with Healing in His Wings*. God by His Favour made their *Mountain to stand strong*, and many other Expressions equivalent to these, which convey no other Idea, than what is intended by Communion with Him. And,

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By this Communion is designed, a spiritual Perception of the Glory of God in the Mediator, Jesus Christ, and a comfortable Sense of Divine Love to the Soul, which begets holy Joy, Adoration, and an humble Trust in the Lord. And it is the gracious, sovereign Pleasure of each Divine Person, thus to manifest Himself to the Saints, and to encourage them to put forth Acts of Faith and Hope on Him, agreeably to that Part He bears in their eternal Salvation: Which Communion is founded on the new Covenant, or Covenant of Grace. For God cannot have any Fellowship with the Violators of the Covenant of Works, on the Foundation of that Covenant. The Reasons are these; according to that Covenant He holds them guilty. They have transgressed the Terms of it, and, therefore, they must, in Relation to that Covenant, be considered as guilty Persons. And the Nature of it allows of no Familiarity and Friendship, between God and the guilty Creature. It denounces a Curse against Sinners. *Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all Things, which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* They are obnoxious to Divine Wrath and Vengeance. All Title to Divine Favour is forfeited irrecoverably, and that for ever, according to the first Covenant; and Man is liable to eternal Misery in a Separation from God. Divine Righteousness inflexibly requires a Satisfaction to be made to that Covenant, if the Sinner re-enjoys Communion with God.

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The old Way of enjoying Nearness to God, is entirely cut off by Sin. It is impossible, that the Person of a Sinner can be accepted with God, by Vertue of, or according to a Covenant, by which he stands condemned in His Sight. The Acceptation of the Person of Man with God, was the Foundation whereon he drew near to Him, in the old Covenant; and, therefore, as his Crime rendered his Person unacceptable to His Maker, it will be an eternal Bar to his Enjoyment of Divine Fellowship, on the Ground of the Covenant of Works. The *new* Covenant is a gracious Provision for the Remission of our Guilt, and the Acceptance of our Persons, in such a Way, as was wholly unknown to the *old* Covenant. Now, as spiritual Converse with God, is founded upon the Acceptation of our Persons with Him, it necessarily follows, that our Justification in His Sight, is *prior* in Order of Nature, at least, unto our Enjoyment of a Sense of His Favour. I have thought, that it is in Order of Time, as well as in Order of Nature, *prior* thereunto; and I have not yet met with any Thing, which convinces me of a Mistake in that Matter, and, as I suppose, I never shall. But however that be, I am persuaded, that all such must allow, that the Acceptation of the Person, through the Obedience and Sacrifice of Christ, is *prior* in Order of Nature, to gracious Communion with God, who embrace the Doctrine of the new Covenant, because that follows upon, and can never precede

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cede Justification in His Sight, either according to the old, or the new Covenant. Acceptation with God, is the Ground of Communion with Him, according to both Covenants. In the new Covenant, an immoveable and everlasting Foundation is laid for our enjoying Fellowship with God.

1. He unalterably wills and engages to be our God, our Father, and our Friend. *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People.* This Resolution, Engagement, and Promise, wholly spring from sovereign Goodness, Grace and Mercy, which is a never-failing Source of Good to our poor Souls. Oh! Believer, thou mayst view this Origin of thy Blessedness with holy Triumph, in the midst of all Dangers and Distresses, which at any Time surround and invade thee. For as it is not the Effect of any external Cause, nothing can move God to recede from this infinitely merciful Purpose, nor bring Him to violate this gracious and free Engagement to thee, in Christ thy Head, in this Covenant, which is *ordered in all Things, and sure.* It is astonishing Goodness, that such a solid and firm Foundation should be laid for our lasting, yea, everlasting Communion with God, who, so justly deserve to be eternally driven, by avenging Justice from His Presence.

2. God promises to pardon all our Sins. Guilt is an effectual Bar to our Enjoyment of a Sense of God's Favour, in the first Covenant; but it is not so in the new, because Remission

sion is promised therein; and a gracious Method is provided for the Removal and Expiation of our Sins, though they be *many, great, and dreadfully aggravated*. The Language of God in this Covenant, is, *I will be merciful to their Unrighteousnesses, their Sins and their Iniquities will I remember no more*. It is on this Foundation, that Grace is communicated in our Regeneration; and on this Ground it is, that all Supplies of Grace are conveyed to our Souls afterwards, to maintain that good Work in us. The Blood of this Covenant cleanses from Guilt contracted after Conversion, otherwise the Saints would be deprived of the Benefit of Communion with God; and instead of a comfortable Sense of His Favour, they would inevitably come under His terrible Displeasure.

3. He graciously justifies their Persons. They are *justified freely by His Grace*. And that is by the sovereign Appointment of Christ's Righteousness to be theirs, and the gracious Imputation of that Righteousness unto them. And that Righteousness consists of inward Purity, and a Behaviour in all Respects, such, as the first Covenant required. The Glory of the first Covenant is not in the least Degree eclipsed, by the Constitution of the second, and its taking place: So far from it, that it is an Exaltation and Advancement of its Honour; for the new Covenant provides a Subject for the old, who is infinite in Dignity; His fulfilling its Terms, therefore, gives it such a ra-

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diant Glory, as it could not have received, by the unerring Obedience of Men universally. The Gospel Constitution is not prejudicial to the Law; but, on the contrary, it secures its Interest with an Advantage, that demands our holy Wonder, as well as our greatest Gratitude. Men propose to enjoy Safety in such a Way, as is dishonourable to the Law; but God will never suffer it. He saves Sinners, indeed, which is the greatest Wonder we shall ever be acquainted with; but it is in such a Way as *magnifies the Law*, and makes it *honourable*. And, therefore, in this Appointment He takes infinite Delight. *He is well pleased for Christ's Righteousness Sake.* And that everlasting Righteousness, is the everlasting Foundation of the Saints Communion with God. Their Justification is the Ground of their present Communion, with their Heavenly Father, and of their most near Fellowship with Him in the future State. *Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies.* All our Approaches unto God, ought to be on this Foundation, as our Admission into Heaven will be solely on this Ground. Let us only make mention of the Righteousness of our dear Saviour, when we draw near to our Covenant God and Father; for in that alone He accepts of our Persons, and because of that only, it is, that He delights in, and holds Communion with us, while we are in this State of Distance from His Heavenly Court, the Seat of His immediate Presence.

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These precious Truths are necessary to be well settled in our Minds, as to our Persuasion and spiritual Understanding of them. If we are not convinced of them, if we discern not their Importance and Glory, if we acquiesce not in them, we shall find it impossible to think of an Approach unto God, under a Sense of Guilt, Pollution, and Unworthiness, with the least Measure of Satisfaction, or Boldness and Liberty of Mind; nor can we form any Expectation and Hope of God's meeting and blessing us, except on these Principles. Sinful Men *miserably cheat* their own Souls, who hope to enjoy an Interview with God here, or hereafter, to their Joy, who reject this *new* Way of Fellowship with Him. Death, Misery, and eternal Woe will be the Consequence of such Rejection, if it is final. Life, Peace, Consolation, and Blessedness, are only to be received and enjoyed, in the *new and living Way*, which is peculiar to the *new* Covenant. And, since a Foundation is laid for lasting, yea, eternal Friendship between God and our Souls, how ought we to admire and adore His free Grace, whose Basis this is, and all the Blessings that thereon rest?

First, The Saints enjoy Communion with God the Father. He is their Father in Christ. The Affection He hath unto them, and the Familiarity He permits them to use with Him, are suitable to a Character so tender and expressive of Kindness, Compassion and Care.

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I. In His Love, which is,

1. Eternal, and not of late Date. All the transient Acts of that Love, are in Time; but itself is from Eternity. Christ the Head was the Object of the Father's Love before the Foundation of the World; and His People also as early, were Objects of His Love. For the *Father bath loved them, as He bath loved Christ: Because He loved them with an everlasting Love, therefore, He draws them with Loving-Kindness.* Their present Existence is not necessary to an Interest in Divine Love, nor to any of the *immanent, internal* Acts of that Love towards them, such as the Choice of them to eternal Salvation, is, &c. Those whom God from the Beginning chose to Salvation, He loved.

As for that *logical Axiom*, that a Non-Entity, or what is not, cannot be the Subject of any Affection: In Divinity, and as applied to God's eternal Acts of Favour towards His People, it is no better than *learned Nonsense*; which, if admitted, would evert the whole Ground of our Salvation. The certain future Existence of the Persons beloved and chosen to eternal Salvation is plainly supposed; but not their present Being in either of those Acts. Divine Love was fixed on the human Nature of Christ before its actual Subsistence, and Divine Favour was placed on the Persons of all the Elect, before any of them really existed, yea, before Time commenced. And, as to

the common Objection, that then God must love His People in their Sins, it is of no Weight at all. What the Objection expresses is true; if not, no Design of saving them from their Sins had ever been formed in the Divine Mind, nor would any Divine Acts have ever been put forth in order to that End. The Distinction of God's loving their *Persons*, and hating their *Sins*, is easy and just. Besides, God's Approbation of the Work of Grace in Believers, is not His Love to their Persons, but it is quite of a distinct Consideration from that Love He bears to their Persons. In general, Professors are grown weary of the Doctrine of God's everlasting Love, and will scarcely allow of the Mention of it, through I know not how many groundless Fears, of ill Consequences following upon it, which carnal and corrupt Reason suggests. That, our depraved Nature may abuse this Doctrine, I am sensible; and I also know, that it will take Occasion to sin even from the Commandment; but I do not think it is proper, on these Accounts, to part with, either the Law, or the Gospel. Let not the Children of God neglect His Favour, because the *Children of the Devil* may dare to abuse the evangelical Revelation of it, unto the just Damnation of their Souls.

2. Divine Love is sovereign. God's Approbation of the innocent Creature, is according to Right; Justice requires it; but Love to a guilty Creature, must be an Act of Sovereignty. Right hath no Place in that Matter; it cer-

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tainly is an Act of God's free Will, without all Direction from Justice. He loves not sinful Men, because it is fit and proper for Him to love them; but because He WIL L, and for no other Reason. *He hath Mercy, because He will have Mercy; and He hath Compassion, because He will have Compassion.* As there is nothing in Deity, whereunto our cursed Nature is more opposite than Divine Sovereignty; so there is nothing in God, which true Grace more chearfully submits unto, and more humbly adores: Its Language is, *Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy Sight.*

3. The Love of God is immense. His Grace is, as He Himself is, absolutely without Limits. The Riches of Divine Mercy and Goodness, in Number far exceed the Sand of the Sea Shore. Hence we read of the *Multitude of His tender Mercies, of the Riches of His Grace, and of the exceeding Riches of His Kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.* These Epithets are expressive of the boundless Nature of Divine Love to the Elect. And as such Attributions are given unto it, so, such Acts and Benefits arise from it, as will own no other than infinite Mercy for their Cause, *viz.* an eternal Decree in God, to bring unworthy Creatures to the Enjoyment of the highest Good and Glory, their Nature is capable of possessing, which was an Act of the richest Mercy and Grace. Again, God has given us His Son and His Spirit, Grace and Glory, nothing that is good Divine Love withholds from

us. Since the Grace of God bestows upon us what is in its Nature most valuable, and even that to the utmost Capacity of our enjoying it; certainly it is in itself infinitely beyond our Comprehension. We can as soon span the Heavens, and grasp the Earth, as form adequate Ideas of that Love, which is the Fountain of our Salvation and Blessedness. And, yet how backward are we to receive what God freely gives, and kindly invites us to take at His Hand, because we are conscious to ourselves of great Unworthiness? Whereas, the Bestowment, of those Favours, would not be Grace, but only Liberality, if we were the Subjects of a Fitness moving to the Communication of them. We sometimes say within ourselves, when we are conversant about spiritual Blessings, and our Souls desire a Participation of them: Alas! these are Favours my Unworthiness forbids me to hope for the Enjoyment of. Surely it will be deemed Presumption, in such a one as I am, to hope for Benefits of so glorious and exalted a Nature. When we thus reason, we dishonour the Grace of God, whose Glory consists in conferring the most eminent Blessings on the most unworthy. Never do we honour God so much, as when lying in the Dust, at His Foot-stool, under a Sense of our own Vileness; we appropriate to ourselves the richest Blessings His Grace bestows, being encouraged thereunto by an Apprehension of the absolute Freedom with which they are given.

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Grace has not thought them too great to give, and we ought not to think them too great for us to expect, and hope for the Enjoyment of.

4. The Love of God is immutable. If its Nature admitted of Change, it might cease; And the Cessation of Divine Love would be the drying up of the Fountain, from whence spring all our Life, Peace, Comfort, and Joy. But this can never be. Love, which hath a Beginning, may possibly have an End. But Favour, which never began, will ~~never~~, never end. God's Love to His People, no more commenced, than His Existence; nor will it cease, alter, or abate, any more than His Being will discontinue. When He ceases to love His Saints, He will cease to be. He intends to assure us of this most interesting Truth, when He declares of Himself, that He is Love. *God is Love.* Greater Ground of Security we need not, nor can have, than this is.

5. Divine Love is inseparable. Immutability supposes the endless Duration, and the Equality of its Intensity at all Times, without any Variation. Its Inseparableness, seems to point out the absolute Impossibility of any Change, which may take Place in the State, Circumstances, or Frames of those, who are the Objects of it, dividing them from that Love. *Nothing shall separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* As it will never decline, nor cease of itself, because its own Nature is unchanging; so, no
Temptations

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Temptation, (shall I say it? I will, and pronounce it *boldly* too) nor Sin shall ever divide the Saints from the Love of God in Christ, *nor Things present, nor Things to come*, whatever those Things may be, and are. In one Word, nothing which can come within the Reach of Language, or even Imagination, shall divide Believers from the Heart of their Heavenly Father.

Now, to have Communion with God in His Love, is to discern the Nature of it, and act Faith upon it, as it is revealed in the holy Scripture. Hence the Apostle *John* says, *we have known, and believed the Love that God hath unto us*. Sometimes the Saints are chiefly conversant about it in its Properties, and rejoice and triumph in its Eternity, Sovereignty, Immenfity, Immutability, and in the Inseparableness, of its Nature. The Holy Spirit places them at the Shore of this boundless infathomable Ocean, and enables them to take a very far extended Prospect of it, whereby their Souls are possessed with Delight, Wonder, and Adoration. He causes them to approach to that Throne with Pleasure; mixed with Awe and Reverence, from which this *River of the Water of Life* proceeds; and its Rise, numerous Streams, and constant Flow, fill them with *Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. Sometimes, they are delightfully engaged in viewing the great, and manifold Effects of Divine Love. Effects which could only spring from such a Cause, as they know it

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to be by the Prospects they have been favoured with of its Properties and Nature, and both excite their Praise, their Joy, and their Astonishment. And, their Hearts feel a holy Flame of Love kindled towards God. *We love Him, because He first loved us.* Divine Love manifested to our Souls never fails to produce a holy, sincere, and cordial Affection unto God. His Love to us is the powerful and resistless Attractive of our Love to Him. The Reason why we love Him no more than we do, is because we are no more conversant with His infinite Love to us. The Grace of Love in us increases, or declines, as we exercise Faith on Divine Love, in a higher, or lower Degree.

II. The Saints enjoy Communion with God in His Counsels, and Purposes concerning their Salvation. That Design was an impenetrable Secret, in the Divine Mind. No created Understanding could ever have discovered it. What Grace purposes, and acts in Favour of Sinners, natural Reason, could never have so much as conjectured at. *This Secret is with them, who fear the Lord, and He shews unto them His Covenant.* His deep Things, He reveals to Believers, by His Spirit, and He gives them the Knowledge of those Things, which are freely given unto them of God.

Secondly, Intimacy and Fellowship is maintained between Christ and the Church. His Relation to the Saints is the Ground of His
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Communion with them: They are His *Brethren*, His *Children*, His *Bride*, His *Members*, *Bone of His Bone*, *Flesh of His Flesh*. If, therefore, Friendship should not subsist between Him and them, the great End of their Union would not be answered, and the Characters He wears would sink into *empty* and *insignificant* Titles.

In the Book of *Solomon's Song*, that Intimacy and Intercourse which Christ and the Church hold, with mutual Delight and Pleasure, is represented in a most lively and affecting Manner.

Some of the Church's Expressions of Christ's Beauty rise so high, and some Parts of her Language relating to her Affection unto Him, are so strong, as might induce us to conclude, that it is designed, as a Representation of Fellowship between Christ and her, in Heaven, rather than of their mutual Friendship, in the present State; but that, there are some other Things said and acted by the Church, which will by no means, allow us to understand it in that Light, *viz.* Her Acknowledgment of her Blackness: *Look not upon me, because I am black: I am black but comely, as the Tents of Kedar, as the Curtains of Solomon.* Which she will have no Ground to say of herself, when array'd with shining Robes of Glory, and actually become the Subject of Holiness unblameable, in the Presence of her Heavenly Father. And, we find her Conduct in some Instances, was such to-

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wards her Beloved, as it can never be, when she is taken by Him into His immediate Presence. She was backward of receiving Him, when He condescended to wait upon her, and in melting, moving Language called her to give Him Entrance, Chap. v. Besides, sometimes, we find her sadly bewailing the Loss of His Presence, which she will have no Cause for, in Heaven; there she will always have Him in her View, she will ever be near Him, and without any Interruption hold the most sweet and delightful Communion with Him. Add to these Considerations, she was not in her present Condition above the grieving Censures, and unfriendly Rebukes of such, whose Character, and Work, required in them a very different Behaviour towards her. *The Watchmen, that went about the City, found me, they smote me, they wounded me, the Keepers of the Walls took away my Veil from me.* They behaved towards her, as if she was a *Prostitute*. These Things forbid our understanding this Book, as a Representation of that Communion, which subsists in the Heavenly World between Christ and the Church; and, consequently, even, here, Believers may enjoy very clear Views of Christ's Glory, they may be filled with a ravishing Sense of His Love to them, and Delight in them; and, their Hearts may glow with ardent Affection to Him.

The Church describes the Beauties of the Person of Christ; asserts her Interest in Him, and

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and His in her. She expresses a vehement Desire of His Presence, and the Delight she took in His Company. Again, she declares her Enjoyment of it. And, Christ, on His Part, represents her Beauty. Declares to her, that she was the Object of His Love, Delight, and Complacency. He kindly invites her to come into His Company, acquaints her, that He desires to see her Face, and hear her Voice, that her Beauties *ravished* His Heart. And, that He valued none but her: Or that none but she was the Object of His Affection and Love.

Thirdly, The Saints enjoy Communion with the Blessed Spirit.

The Part He bears in the Oeconomy of our Salvation, is, in general, the Sanctification of our Souls. For, we are *chosen to Salvation through Sanctification of the Spirit*. His Office, and Work, is to reveal and apply to us what the Father hath given to us in the everlasting Covenant, which is *all our Salvation, and all our Desire*. And what Christ hath *impetrated* for us, by His Obedience and the Oblation of Himself to God as a Sacrifice, according to His Engagement in that Covenant. This includes the Holy Spirit's Residence in our Souls, and His gracious Influence upon us, whereby He gives Being unto a spiritual Principle in our Hearts, and graciously excites that Principle, as well as maintains and preserves it. He convinces, comforts, and gives Testimony to the Saints of their Adoption,

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Adoption, or of their standing in the near and honourable Relation of Sons to God. Subdues Sin, cherishes and promotes Holiness in our Souls. And abides with us in the blessed Character of a *Comforter*, notwithstanding, we often *grieve* Him, by our Folly, Sin, and base Ingratitude; without which, nothing would be more certain, than our eternal Ruin. These benign Influences of the Holy Spirit upon us, and those Effects, which they produce, are *boldly* pronounced *Enthiasm*, by many, who wear a religious Character, and put in their Claim for the Name of Christians. But true it is, that in these Things consists the very Life of *real* Christianity, and he, who is an *absolute* Stranger unto an Experience of their Truth in himself, let him be what he may, in other Respects, *a Christian he is not*. The Reason why Men despise these Things, as the Effects of a *warm* and *deluded* Imagination, is, they find them not in themselves. And, as they are not in them, they conclude, that they have no *real* Existence in others. Nor is this to be wondered at, for the *spiritual Man*, how well soever he is known, *merely*, as a Man, he is wholly unknown as he is *spiritual*, unto the *carnal Man*, he discerns him not: *The spiritual Man is judged*, or discerned (*αναγνωριζει*) of *no Man* *. Hence it is, that Love to a Saint, as such, is a sure Evidence of the Spirituality of him, who is the Subject of that Love. Grace
only

* 1 Cor. ii. 16;

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only discerns, and values Grace in another: Or it is only the Image of Christ in one Man, that discerns and esteems it in another.

Communion with the Holy Spirit consists in spiritual Views of that Office, which He graciously condescended to take upon Himself, in the Oeconomy of our Salvation, and of His Operations on us; as Effects of that infinite Love He bears to our Persons.

And it is under His blessed Guidance and Instruction, that we enjoy Fellowship with Christ: For *He takes of His Things, and shews them unto us.* In Prospects whereof, lie all the Power, Sweetness, and Glory of *real Religion*: Let some *graceless* and *unholy* Persons deride those Things, as they please. And, therefore, I would, a little more particularly consider the *important* and *delightful* Subject of Communion with Christ, as it is represented, in that Divine and Heavenly Book of *Solomon's Song*. And,

1. It is a very *elegant* Description, which the Church gives of His Person. Says she; *He is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.* That is to say, there is none like Him, in Beauty and Glory. She may well be thought to have in View the Constitution of His Person: Or His two Natures, Divine and human, as they are personally united: the Purity of His human Nature, and its bloody Agony, unparalleled Sufferings, and accursed Death, whereby, her Redemption from Sin, Curse, and Hell was effected. *His Head is*

as

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as the most fine Gold; His Locks are bushy, and black as a Raven. Wherein, she hath Respect to the Importance, Purity, and Glory of all His Designs, which are formed with the highest Wisdom, and, therefore, are unalterable, and cannot fail of their Accomplishments. Besides, she intends His Beauty and Strength, He never declines in His Vigour. Grey Hairs are not, nor ever will be found upon Him. His Beauty fades not: His Strength decays not. She adds: His Eyes are as the Eyes of Doves, by the Rivers of Waters, washed with Milk, and fitly set. His Eyes are piercing, He hath an exact Knowledge of all Things. He is acquainted with all the Troubles, Temptations, Sorrows, and Wants of His Saints. For He is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart, and tries the Reins. Besides, He is chaste, tender, loving, and constant in His Care of the Church. For His Eye of Love is immovably fixed on her. Farther, His Cheeks are as a Bed of Spices, as sweet Flowers. In Him His dear Saints find Rest, under Weariness, and Fatigue, occasioned by Sin, Temptation, and a Variety of Afflictions, which attend them, in this Vale of Tears; and Revival, when they faint in their Minds, thro' the Sharpness of their spiritual Conflicts, with the Enemies of their Souls. Besides, His Fragrancy fills them with inexpressible Delight. His Name is as Ointment poured forth, which spreads an Odour all-around, and, therefore,
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the Virgins love Him: His Lips like Lillies dropping sweet-smelling Myrrh. They are lovely beyond Comparifon, and all His Words are sweet, precious, and expreffed in a moft graceful Manner. He fpeaks, as never Man fpake. For, Grace is poured into His Lips. His Hands are as Gold Rings fet with the Beryl. All his Works are glorious, for He is wonderful in working, both in Providence and Grace. His Belly is as bright Ivory overlaid with Sapphires. Chrift's Affection to the Church is pure, difinterefted, and permanent. His Legs are as Pillars of Marble, fet upon Sockets of fine Gold. His Strength is firm and durable: All His Steps are graceful, and answer Ends moft valuable. His Countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars. His Appearance is grand, majeftick, and mild, it commands Awe, and begets Love. His Mouth is moft fweet, He is altogether lovely. His Speech is foft and winning. And He is all Beauty, and Perfection.

2. Chrift describes the Beauty and Glory of the Church. He commends her Garments, which are *Garments of Salvation*, a Robe of Righteoufnefs, of infinite Value, and of everlasting Duration, Influence, and Efficacy, as to her Acceptation with God, and Title to Bleffednefs. The Fragancy of this Robe is great, *like the Smell of Lebanon*. And its Splendour is like that of the Sun. The Church in her Juftification is *clear as the Sun*, though in her Sanctification, ſhe is but *fair as the*

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Moon, not without Spots and Waneing. The Divine Father delights in the Saints, as He views them in this *white Raiment*, and pronounces them perfect therein. *Thou art perfect through my Comeliness, which I have put upon thee. The Lord is well pleased for Christ's Righteousness Sake, who hath magnified the Law, and made it honourable.* Again, the Church's Beloved delineates her beauteous Features, and expresses how much her various Graces delighted Him. That she had *ravished His Heart with one of her Eyes, i. e. the Eye of Faith*, which is very penetrating, and is capable of discerning Objects at a great Distance. It looks into *the deep Things of God*, Things which the Eye of mere Reason can never discover, nor discern the Nature of: And it penetrates into the heavenly World, and views the glorious Objects which are *within the Veil, whither the Fore-runner is for us entered.* And the Eye of Faith is chaste and pure. It bestows no *amorous Glances*, on earthly Objects, nor looks to any, but unto Christ, and His Blood, and Righteousness, for Pardon, Peace, Reconciliation, and Acceptance with God: And unto His Fulness for all Supplies of Grace, Wisdom, and Strength, in Times of Temptation, Trial and Affliction, yea, through the Whole of the Christian's Pilgrimage, in this World. These Actings of the Grace of Faith on Christ, are exceedingly pleasing to Him, and greatly to the Advantage of the Saints; for hereby they become more and more like Him,

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Him, increase in Love to Him, and by so much the less do they esteem the *delectable* Things of this World. Acts of Faith on the Person, Offices, and Benefits of Christ, and on the Glory of God through Him, never fail of elevating the Mind above this earthly Globe, and raise the Affections to heavenly Objects, which infinitely transcend in Glory and Grandeur, the noblest, and most refined of terrestrial Enjoyments. And, yet, alas! how much are the Minds of many Professors disposed to cast smiling Looks on their own *filthy Rags*, rather than look steadily on the infinitely glorious Righteousness of Christ, in the great Affair of their Justification before God, and rather chuse to view their own *imaginary* Beauties, than the Glories of the Person of Christ? Besides, Christ commends the Love of the Church: *How fair is thy Love?* The Saints are Subjects of a spiritual Affection to Him. Others see no *Beauty*, or *Comeliness* in Him, *why they should desire Him*, in their Esteem, He is a *tender Plant*, and as a *Root out of a dry Ground*; but, in the Account of Believers, He is *fairer*, infinitely *fairer than the Children of Men*. For they discern the Divine Perfections, which He possesses, and the Purity of His human Nature, which is richly adorned with all the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, in their Perfection. They view Him in the *Form of God*, and as the *Brightness of the Father's*
B h 2 *Glory,*

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ger, and Wrath; but are content without a Sense of His Love. Nature trembles at an Apprehension of His Vengeance, because it is not to be borne: Grace is a holy spiritual Desire of a Sense of His Favour. Those Jealousies which attend the Saints concerning an Interest in the Love of a dear Saviour, often arise from a Misapprehension about the Nature of His Love, or, at least, from a Want of a due Consideration of it. They are suspicious of Christ's kind Regard to them, because of their Unworthiness. They discern so much Impurity in their Hearts, so many Imperfections in all their Services, and are conscious of so many Instances of Backsliding from Him, that they fear it cannot be; that such unlovely, and unworthy Creatures, as they know themselves to be, should have an Interest in His Kindness. These Thoughts spring up in their Minds, from Unbelief, and the Want of a proper Attention to the Nature of the Love of Christ, which is absolutely free and unattracted. If none were to be the Objects of His Favour, who are destitute of amiable Qualities, or engaging Excellencies, not one of the human Race ever would be the Object of His Affection. It is in Consequence of an Interest in His Love, that we become the Subjects of such Dispositions of Soul, as are pleasing to Him. His Love to our Persons is the Cause; and not the Effect of Holiness in us,

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It may be of Use to the Saints, well to consider what Christ's Love to them is, and how it differs from His Approbation of their Graces, and the Actings thereof. For they are distinct Things, and ought not to be confounded. His Love to their Persons, is *a Will to do them Good, with Delight and Joy therein*: This is eternal, free, and immutable, or always the same, whatever, their State, or Circumstances may be. His Delight in their Graces, is not His Love to their Persons; but is His Approbation of what He works in them, as a Fruit of that Affection He bears unto them. From hence Christians may collect, that their Unworthiness is no Objection to their Interest, in the Kindness of a dear Redeemer. And, this, if properly attended unto, will enable us to answer the Cavils, which are raised against the Love of Christ to Men, while they are under the Dominion of Sin. For, if His Love to the Persons of Men, is distinct from His Approbation, or Disapprobation of their Temper, and Actions, certainly, it will follow, that His kind Regard may be extended to their Persons, even while they are the Subjects, of no other than detestable Qualities, because an Approbation, neither of what they be, nor of what they act, is supposed in His Love to their Persons. Blessed be God, that Creatures most unworthy of His Love, may be beloved by Him, without the least Reflection on His Holiness and Purity; if that was a Thing impossible.

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If our Communion with Christ in His Person, Love, Relations, and Offices, is *rare*, and but little; we have but small Experience of that *Joy, which is unspeakable and full of Glory*. Grace is not entertained, nourished, strengthened, or increased in us. For all our Vigour, Liveliness, and Improvement in Purity, depend on the Actings of the Grace of Faith upon Christ, as our *all in all*. The Graces of the Holy Spirit in us languish, and we become barren in our Frames, in our Walk and Conversation, if we live not in the Exercise of Faith on Him; unless we *abide in Him, or walk in Him, as we have received Him*, we shall bring forth no Fruit to the Glory of our Heavenly Father. Thro' one Cause, or another, too, too often we are prevented so doing, to the great Detriment of our Souls, and the Prejudice of the new Creature in us. So far as we are Strangers unto a Renewal of Acts of Faith upon Christ, we must be without that pure, spiritual and holy Delight, which arises from believing Views of Him, or gracious and intimate Communion with Him. And, therefore, it ought to be our Desire and Aim, in all Duties, in all Ordinances, to behold the King of Zion *in His Beauty*. If He graciously condescends to sit at His Table with us, our *Spikenard, will send forth a sweet Smell, i. e.* our Graces will emit a sweet Odour, and our Souls will rejoice in God our Saviour.

Moreover, Communion with Christ, in what He hath done for us, will greatly revive
our

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our Graces, and cheer our Minds. If we view that He hath finished our Transgression, made an End of our Sins, made Reconciliation for our Iniquity, and brought in an everlasting Righteousness for us, in order to our Justification before God, Pleasure inexpressible will possess our Breasts. If we act Faith on the Victory He hath obtained over all our Enemies, Sin, Satan, Death and Hell, and we behold Him as *crowned with Glory and Honour*, upon that Conquest, our spiritual Affections will be warmed, our Minds will be raised above this vain World: God Himself will be the Object of our Joy, Delight, and Adoration, who in the Character of the God of all Grace, designed, constituted, and gave to us such a gracious, glorious, and every Way suitable and complete Saviour. And our Souls will be much animated, and encouraged to *fight the good Fight of Faith*; nor shall we doubt of enjoying in the Issue a full Conquest over all our spiritual Adversaries thro' Him that hath loved us. It is the Want of this Communion with our Redeemer, in what He hath done for us, that occasions us to go mourning in the Manner we do, now we are conflicting with Sin, Satan, and the World. Acts of Faith on Him, would enable us to triumph in the midst of our Conflicts, with the Enemies of our Souls.

Besides, Fellowship with our Blessed Lord in those precious Benefits, which He hath procured for, and effectually secured to us,
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by His Mediatorial Acts, and Sufferings, is a Spring of heavenly Joy to our Hearts, viz. The most glorious Robe of Righteousness, which adorns our Persons, renders us righteous eternally in the Divine Account, and gives us an unalienable Right and Title to future Blessedness. The Pardon of our Sins, which is inclusive of our Deliverance from Condemnation, Wrath, and Vengeance. His Holy Spirit, with all necessary Supplies of Grace, to revive the good Work in us when decayed, to maintain it in our Souls, in spite of all the Opposition it meets with from Sin and Satan, and to perfect it in Glory. The Enjoyment of Communion with Him in these His Benefits, must yield us the highest Pleasure. No earthly Possessions are comparable, in Importance, Excellency, and Glory, to these Blessings, and, therefore, nothing in the whole World, can give that Pleasure, to the Mind, as Prospects of them by Faith always produce in the Souls of Believers. They say, as the Church did with holy Exultation, when favoured with this Divine Fellowship: *I will greatly rejoyce in the Lord, my Soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the Garments of Salvation, He hath covered me, with the Robe of Righteousness.*

I add, the Apprehension of that Goodness, Grace, Mercy, Wisdom, Righteousness and Justice, which shine gloriously in this admirable Constitution, and Appointment of
Christ

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Christ to be our all, and in all, delights and ravishes the heavenly minded Person. An Advancement in a spiritual Understanding of these Things, renders the Soul more humble, more joyful, more holy, more mortified to the World. And, therefore, we cannot get a better Part by ourselves, as we cannot do any Thing more glorifying to God, than seeking after this spiritual Communion with Him, and with His Son *Jesus Christ*. Sad it is, that the Flesh, that the empty, fading, and putrid Things of Time and Sense should ever prevent us of, interrupt and make Breaks upon a Fellowship, so spiritual, so sublime, so heavenly, and whereby our best Interest is so much promoted. This it is, that embitters Life to spiritually minded Persons, and causes them earnestly to desire to depart, and be with Christ, when no Interruptions thro' any Cause whatever, will attend their Communion with Him. They sometimes say with *Job*: *I loath it, I would not live always*. Their Souls long for the Enjoyment of that blissful State, wherein they will for ever be near unto, view with unmixed, and increasing Pleasure the Glory of God in the Person of Christ, as it is displayed in all His Mediatorial Acts, and Sufferings, in order to bring them unto that glorious State. The Sweetness of the First-fruits, which they have in present Possession, makes them long for the delightful and plenteous Harvest. The Importance, Glory, and great Variety of spiritual Things, cannot

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not fail of affording to a spiritual Mind, Satisfaction and Delight.

As God designed no other Matters for the Entertainment of the new-born Principle, in the Souls of His Children, than those, and such like glorious Truths, whereof Christ is the Center and Sum : So no other than these Things it desires, nor can it take up with ; because they are not of a Nature suitable and congruous to Grace, for that is wholly spiritual and heavenly. That noble Principle raises the Mind above earthly Enjoyments, and Treasures, it leads the Soul into Heaven, and converses with those glorious Objects, that are within the Veil, whither its Fore-runner, is for it entered. It takes a View of Christ in His Glory, at the Right Hand of His Father with pleasing Wonder, and a holy Rapture. The Church invites the *Daughters of Jerusalem to take this Prospect : Go forth, and behold King Solomon, with the Crown where-with His Mother crowned Him, in the Day of His Espousals, in the Day of the Gladness of His Heart.* Grace exults with Joy at the Sight of Christ, as crowned with Glory, who was crowned with Thorns for our Sakes. It is fit, that He who was reduced to the lowest State of Humiliation, to promote the Glory of God, in the Salvation of the Objects of His Love, should be raised to that State of Dignity, He now enjoys at His Right Hand. No Prospect can be more pleasing than this is, to those, who love our dear Lord *Jesus.*
And

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And, if Views by Faith of the Glory of Christ, afford us so much Delight: Oh! what Pleasure must possess our grateful Souls, when we shall enjoy the heavenly Vision of the Glory of our best Friend?

5. The Church sometimes was without the Company of her Beloved: He withdrew from her, and though she sought Him diligently, she could not find Him. This not infrequently is the sorrowful Case with the Saints. Such as are the Children of Light, sometimes walk in Darknes, and are without the Light of Comfort and Joy for a Season. When clear and bright Days are enjoyed, and the Rays of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon the Christian, especially, at first Conversion, he expects not, it may be, dark and cloudy Seasons; much less, Nights of melancholy Desertion and Darknes; but unto his great Sorrow, he meets with them, and he may be tempted to fear, that all his Comfort was Illusion, and that, that Light, wherein he formerly rejoiced, was fancied only. Which Apprehension, so far as it is suffered to prevail, must be attended with Distress and Grief. *Weeping endureth for a Night, but Joy shall come in the Morning.* For which let the Christian wait and hope. His Business is *to wait on the Lord, and be of good Courage, and to continue in Waiting for Him, yea, to wait patiently for His gracious Return unto his sorrowing Soul. Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart.* And, though

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though that precious Seed may lie under the Clods a considerable Season, let not the Saints faint, and grow weary of waiting for its springing forth, it will certainly shoot forth, and, they shall again, in the appointed Season, enjoy what their Souls are mourning for the want of. *The Vision may be for an appointed Time; but it will speak, it will not lye, and tho' it tarry,* and, as they may think, though it tarry long, let them wait for it. Present Want of *the Light of God's Countenance*, is no Evidence, that the Soul hath not formerly enjoyed that heavenly Favour. Past Experience of Divine Goodness, is a precious Ground of Hope of the Re-enjoyment of that glorious Privilege, notwithstanding, some *blasphemously* pronounce the Encouragement offered to the Saints from that Consideration, *a Rocking them in the Devil's Cradle.* Let no humble sorrowful Souls, because of the Absence of Christ, regard; but despise this *Blasphemy*, as they ought, let it come from whose Mouth soever.

(1.) Christ may stand at a Distance for the Trial of Faith, and to teach His People to live a Life of Dependence on His Care of them, and Love to them, and of His Faithfulness to all His Promises and Engagements, when they enjoy not His sensible comforting Presence with them. It is the Duty of those, who *fear the Lord, and obey the Voice of His Servant, when they walk in Darkness, and have no Light,* then to *trust in the Name of*
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the Lord, and stay upon their God. Such who dare affirm, that this is carnal Security, are very *unskilful in the Word of Righteousness*: And are no better than *bold Intruders* into the sacred Office of the Ministry. One considerable Branch of which is, to *comfort the Mourners in Zion*. And, if there are any such, they must be the Persons, whose Consolation is now proposed.

(2.) Sometimes Christians are guilty of acting a Part, which is offensive to their dear Saviour, and, therefore, He withdraws from them. Darkness spreads itself over them, thick Clouds interpose between Him, and their Souls, and they see not His smiling Face. This was the Case with the Church, when she was inclined unto carnal Ease, rather than to arise and give her Beloved Entrance. He quickened her Desires after the Enjoyment of His Company, by an effectual Touch upon her Heart; but He withdrew, departed, and left her to bewail her Folly, in her sinful Neglect. Upon this her Bowels were troubled, she arose and sought Him; but she found Him not. It is just with Him to hide Himself from us, if we are indifferent about the Enjoyment of His delightful Presence, and give us Occasion to confess our Ingratitude to Him, by the Loss we sustain in Consequence of it. His Love in itself passes under no Vicissitude, it is always the same, that is our Security; but the Manifestation of it to our Souls, from which our Peace, Comfort, and Joy spring,

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may be interrupted, through our Negligence, Sloth, and Sin. A Sense of it, when it is so, may well break our Hearts, for there is no Ingratitude in the World like it.

(4.) If this is the Case with us, let us not content ourselves, without His Presence; but, as the Church did, continue in seeking after Him, although we find Him not for a Season. Our ungrateful Carriage towards Him, we may justly expect Him to resent, and it is our Duty to *acknowledge our Iniquity, wherein we have transgressed against the Lord*: Nor should we think it any Unkindness, that He shews Himself displeased with our evil Conduct, by absenting Himself for a while. Let us hope for the returning Visits of His Love to our Souls, for He will not *always chide, nor keep His Anger for ever*.

(5.) If we have had a gracious Experience of renewed Discoveries of His Love, after we caused Him by our evil Behaviour to depart: Surely, we must be convinced, that it will be our Wisdom to conduct ourselves, with more Caution for Time to come, lest we should be again deprived of what we ought to value more, far more, than Life itself, *viz.* Communion with Him, wherein our Peace, our Joy, and all our Delight, as Christians, consist. Our past Folly should learn us to be wiser.

I would now consider our Communion with God, in the Course of that holy Obedience,
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which He requires us to yield unto Him, while we are in this mortal State. I begin,

First, With Duties of a religious Nature, which are various.

1. Meditation ; this is a Duty that may be practised, with singular Advantage, to our Souls. If our Minds are much exercised, in Contemplation on Divine Subjects, we shall thereby become spiritual and heavenly, in our Desires, and Affections. Nothing is more conducive, to our Improvement, in Knowledge, and Growth in Grace, than a diligent Attention to this Duty. But, alas ! through one Cause, or another, how few of the *fleeting* Hours of our Lives are filled up, with this Exercise ? Our Minds are sluggish, our Avocations are many, and carnal Pleasures, or a vain and trifling Conversation with the Men of the World, or it may be with *luke-warm* Professors, waste so many of our precious Moments, that we have but little Time to spare, from Business and Pleasure, for this heavenly Work. Retirement is not the Choice of many, which certainly is the best, for this Exercise. As to the Subjects of a holy Meditation, they are *noble, grand, sublime, deep, and manifold*. They are *Things whereinto the Angels desire to look* : And, whereon we shall contemplate for ever, if we arrive to Heaven at Death. Is not that enough to invite our Thoughts, and fix our Attention to those important Things ?

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If it is not an engaging Motive with us, in some Measure, to employ our Thoughts, in this Way now, what Reason have we to think, that those glorious Subjects will entertain our Minds hereafter? Without it we cannot have any Evidence, that the Employment of Heaven will be the Matter of our Choice and Delight. If we take no Pleasure in Thoughts of the Grace, Wisdom, Holiness, and *inflexible* Justice of God, as displayed in the Accomplishment of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*, we are *deceived* in imagining, that we are the fit Subjects of that Bliss, and that Glory, which is possessed by *the Spirits of just Men made perfect*. For that, very much consists in an uninterrupted Prospect of, and delightful Contemplation on those momentous Truths. If now we have no Desire to exercise ourselves in holy Meditation on the Glories of the Person of Christ, and concerning His Grace, Compassion, and Benefits, why should we fancy ourselves at all qualified for, or disposed unto that Service in another State? Real Grace is conversant about the same Objects, as Glory is, (a delightful Thought this) though it is not able now to discern them, in their full Brightness, which it will be, when sublimated into Glory; and, therefore, if we are wholly indisposed to this heavenly Exercise now, let us not once think, that it will be our Choice, when with us Time shall be no more.

2. Prayer

2. Prayer is another Branch of our Duty, wherein, we ought to aim at, and desire Communion with God. It is astonishing Goodness, that we are admitted into the Divine Presence, seeing we are so corrupt, and have acted so rebellious a Part, against the infinite Majesty of Heaven. We might have expected an awful Arrest by Divine Justice, and to have been placed at the dreadful Tribunal of God, and have received that terrible Sentence: *Go, ye Cursed, into everlasting Burnings, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* But, amazing Goodness! A Throne of Grace is erected, and a Mercy-Seat for us to approach unto, and present our Supplications before. Nor are we without solid Ground to hope for Audience, and a gracious Answer, to our humble and spiritual Requests, let us ask what we will, that is conducive to our Good, and the Glory of our Heavenly Father for us to enjoy. And, therefore, the Christian under the Influence of the *Spirit of Grace, and Supplications*, uses Freedom, Liberty, and Confidence, in presenting unto God, through Christ, his Petitions, for *Mercy, and Grace to help him in every Time of Need.* And, sometimes, the Saints are favoured with great Nearness unto God, even under the deepest Sense of their Guilt, Vileness, and Misery in themselves, and are enabled to plead the Blood and Righteousness of Christ before the Divine Throne, as the Ground of their Hope of Pardon, Peace, and Acceptation with God,

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and He causes His Face to shine upon them, in this Duty.

3. It is our Duty to read the Word of God, and we ought to have in View, Communion with Him therein. The holy Scripture is a standing Revelation from Heaven, and it is to be considered, as the Voice of Christ speaking to us, no less than if He was actually present, and we heard His precious Mouth, express the heavenly Truths, therein contained. In that sacred Book, what lofty Sentiments are delivered? Doctrines are handed down to us thereby, that far surpass, in *Sublimity, Depth, Sweetness, and Glory*, any Discoveries, our shallow Reason could ever have made. And how many sweet, gracious, and Soul-reviving Promises are therein expressed, which are adapted to all our Circumstances, of what Nature soever they be? Those Promises are confirmed with God's Oath, (infinite Condescension to our Weakness) that we might have strong Consolation, arising from a View of our eternal Security, which rests on the Immutability of God's Counsel concerning our Salvation. Will not the Importance of the Principles Revelation contains invite to the Study of it? Will not the gracious Promises of it, which are Expressions of the Love of God to us, and of His unalterable Designs about us, engage our Attention? Will not the Representation of the Glory of Christ, in this Glass of the Word, attract our Eye, and entertain our Minds?

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If not, our Hearts are carnal, and we *walk as Men*.

4. Attendance on the Preaching of the Gospel, is a Branch of our Duty, wherein, we ought to propose the Enjoyment of Communion with God. It is to be feared, that many Hearers have too little Regard unto this, altho' no Usefulness, or spiritual Advantage arises from hearing the Gospel preached, without, our Souls attend unto it, not *as the Word of Men; but as it is indeed the Word of God*. Curiosity and Taste are the main Things to be gratified with Multitudes, in their hearing, as such cannot reasonably hope for the Enjoyment of Communion with God, it is not their Aim and Desire; they are content without it, when they are charmed, with the Preacher's Accuracy, Reasoning, Pathos, or Address. The Lord only knows how many *trifling* Hearers are found at this Day, among the Number of those, who have so much of the Form of Religion, as rather to attend Divine Service, than spend the Lord's Day wholly, in Sloth, or Pleasure. The Gospel is a *joyful Sound, glad Tidings of great Joy*. For it informs us of God's Love to sinful Men, of the Mission and Coming of Christ into the World to save them. And it gives us Assurance, that Guilt is expiated, that Divine Anger is appeased, that a glorious Robe is provided to clothe our naked Souls, that Riches immense, are laid up for us, who were sunk into the greatest Depths of Poverty, that
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a Kingdom is appointed to us, who were Beggars sitting on a Dunghill. To favour, relish, and embrace these Things by Faith, is to enjoy Communion with God in them.

5. The Celebration of the Institutions of Christ, is a Duty wherein we may hope to enjoy Fellowship with God. They were graciously appointed in order to the Edification of Believers. There is this great Difference between the positive Rites of the Old Testament, and those of the New Testament: Carnal, unregenerate Persons were admitted unto the former, but they have no Right to the latter. Faith was not required of any in order unto Circumcision, offering of Sacrifices, or to any other Acts of external Worship, under that Dispensation. Believers, and Unbelievers, among the Jews, were admitted to all those Ordinances. But it is not so with Respect to the Rites of the New Testament, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Faith and a Discernment of the Lord's Body are required of such as are admitted unto them.

In those sacred Institutions, Christ is represented to our Faith, as suffering, dead, buried, and risen again *for our Justification*. And, therefore, they are wisely and graciously appointed for the Confirmation of our Faith, the Increase of our Hope, Love, and of every other Grace. This is the great End we ought to have in View, in the Celebration of them. And Christ hath given us Ground to expect His Presence and Blessing in both. When He in-

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instituted Baptism, He promised His Presence, so long as that Ordinance shall be administered: *Lo I am with you always, even to the End of the World.*

And as in His Supper He requires, that we should do it in Remembrance of Him: We have comfortable Reason to hope, that he will come into our Souls, and *sup with us*, and that *we shall sup with Him.*

Some Persons strip these Institutions of all their Importance and Significancy, tho' they administer and celebrate them. They cannot, therefore, propose to enjoy Communion with God, and a dear Redeemer in them. Those who deny, that Christ was a proper Sacrifice for Sin, that real Atonement, is made by His Death, and that His descending into *the lower Parts of the Earth*, or *making His Grave with the Wicked*, and *with the Rich in His Death*, was required of Him by Divine Justice, as a necessary Part of his Humiliation for our Crimes, and that his Resurrection, hath a causal and effectual Influence into our Justification, for what Reasons, they continue the Use of the Institutions of Baptism and the Supper, themselves best know. This is certain, if these Principles are false, those Institutions can have no Relation unto any of them; and if they have not, it will be very difficult to shew, wherein their Weight and Significancy consist, or what important Ends respecting the Advantage of our Souls, can possibly accrue to us from the Administration and Celebration

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lebration of them. Such who give up Christian Doctrines, may without Prejudice, also give up Christian Institutions.

We are under Obligation, to design and aim at our spiritual Improvement in these Appointments. And, we have great Encouragement to hope for the Presence of our Heavenly Father, and of our Blessed Saviour, in these Ordinances, which are significative of such glorious and important Things, wherein, our Peace, Consolation, Joy, and eternal Welfare, are so deeply interested.

Communion with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, in those Institutions, consists in holy adoring Thoughts of the Love of each. In Views by Faith of Christ, as suffering, dying, and descending into the Grave, and rising again from the Dead, in order to our Remission, Reconciliation with God, our Justification in His Sight, and a complete and everlasting Conquest over all our formidable Enemies. When Grace is acted on these noble and transporting Subjects, Love to God and Christ is happily promoted, and an Indignation against Sin is cherished in the Soul. Says the Christian, *base, vile, most hateful Thing, Sin*, which was the procuring Cause of such dolorous Sufferings, as my dear Lord Jesus endured in the *Garden*, on the *Cross*, &c. What *Stabs* did my Pride, my Covetousness, my Envy, my Sensuality, and others of my Lusts give my Blessed Lord? And unto what Grief was He put, in order to appease the Justice of God for them? May
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I eternally hate them all, and let their Ruin hasten. This is the Language of Grace in the Hearts of the Saints.

Secondly, Communion with God and Jesus Christ, may be enjoyed in the Practice of the Duties of the second Table. If our Minds were spiritual, holy, and heavenly, we should know how to discharge our Duty towards all Mankind, in such a Manner, as would much glorify our Heavenly Father, and greatly honour our Dear Redeemer.

1. In declining all Words, and all Actions, which tend to prejudice our Neighbour. We are required to *love our Neighbour as ourselves*. And *Love is the fulfilling of the Law: It works no Ill*. Love is always friendly, kind, and benevolent. It never acts a Part, injurious to its Objects. Motives to a universal Love of Men are many, *viz.* the Command of God in the Law; His Bounty and Liberality towards all, in the Dispensations of His Providence, the *Unjust* as well as the *Just*, the *Evil* as well as the *Good*. Wherein we ought to imitate Him, and approve ourselves to be his Children. The Behaviour of our great Master, whose Steps we ought to follow, will teach us *Meekness*, *Gentleness*, and *Benevolence* towards all, even towards our very *Enemies*.[†] If we take Him for our Pattern, we shall not render *Evil for Evil*, but *reward Evil with Good*.

We shall be *inoffensive*, *harmless*, and the *Sons of God without Rebuke*: If we imitate Jesus Christ, who was *holy*, *harmless*, and
without

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without *Guile*. And if our Minds are influenced by these Considerations, and others of the like Nature, to decline every Thing that is prejudicial to our Neighbour, and to act the *kind*, the *sympathetic*, the *benevolent* Part towards all; our Obedience is spiritual, holy, acceptable, and pleasing unto God, thro' Christ, and therein we enjoy Communion both with the Father and the Son. Nothing short of which is real Holiness; *a very necessary Truth to be more considered, than by most it is.*

2. A spiritually minded Person is not without Communion with God, in the Duties of his Calling. The *despised* Mechanic and Artificer, who *labours with his Hands, working the Thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*, is often far more happy than those, who treat him with Contempt. His Mind is exercised upon *noble* and *most excellent* Subjects, and he derives from them pure, holy, and lasting Joy; while the Great, and Rich, are squandering away their Time, in *modish* Visits, a vain, pernicious Conversation, and hurtful Pleasures. As the World now is, a lower Station of Life, is more eligible than advanced Circumstances: The Temptations attending Greatness, unto Pride, Vanity, Luxury, and a Regardlessness of the Power of Religion, where the Form of it is, are so numerous, from the growing Corruption of our dreadful Times. How many have fell down, wounded *forely*, if not *mortally*, by
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the Force of those Temptations? Happy are the few who escape without Injury, by possessing an Abundance. A Person who attends to the Duties of his Calling, as a Part of the *Service* of Christ, which all who profess to be His Followers ought to do, not only honours His God, but reaps great Profit to himself.

5. If we are careful to fill up our several Relations and Stations in Life in a spiritual Manner, we shall not be without Communion with God, in those Duties, thereunto belonging: In the Conjugal Relation, the Paternal, &c. Grace will teach us to practise the Duties of every Relation, in such a Way, as will redound to the Glory of God, and our Good. Were we more holy, how pleasant and profitable would the Discharge of the Duties, of our respective Stations in Life be? Nothing unjust, severe, and cruel, would be required by Masters; Servants would not be unfaithful, unruly, and disobedient to the reasonable Commands of their Masters. If we were under the powerful Influence of our Christian Principles: Love, Meekness, Humility, Sympathy, Benevolence, Kindness, and every Thing that is commendable and praise-worthy, would adorn our Profession; and our Minds would be raised up unto God, in our Duties; Peace, Joy, and Delight would possess our Breasts, and we should esteem the Divine *Precepts concerning all Things to be right.*

But alas! how defective are we in every Duty? How little of that Spirituality is found
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in our Obedience, which our Profession calls for? And, therefore, we bring but little Glory to our Heavenly Father, do small Honour to our Blessed Redeemer, who lived a Life of Sorrows for us, suffered an accursed Death for our Sakes, and now He lives to make Intercession for us. What Need have we of His atoning Blood to cleanse us from sinful Mixtures, which are found in all the Acts of our Obedience? And how necessary are the quickening and sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit upon our Hearts, to enable us to live and act, in a holy, spiritual, and heavenly Manner? And since Pleasure attends all Duties so far, as we are spiritual in the Discharge of them: What Delight will possess our Souls, when we shall serve our God *Day and Night*, without Fainting, Weariness, or the least Tincture of Evil in any of our Acts? And when our Communion with Father, Son, and Spirit shall be *most near, uninterrupted, and without End*? To whom be everlasting Honours ascribed. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

Page 5, Line 21, read *it enjoins*. Page 84, Line 15, blot out *it*.
Page 246, Line 28, read *Favours*. Page 364, Line 19, for *she* read *they*.





